



NEWS RELEASE

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Supervisor Rubio Proposes Kern Health Systems Reforms

KHS 2010 Budget Approved, Included Earmarked Allocation for Executive Bonuses

Over the last several weeks, Kern County Supervisor Michael Rubio has denounced the use of taxpayer dollars by Kern Health Systems in approving “incentive bonuses” for many of its executive officers and regular employees.

At today’s Board of Supervisors meeting, Supervisor Rubio will introduce a proposal that will seek to amend the ordinance that created Kern Health Systems (KHS). Specifically, Supervisor Rubio will request that raises and/or bonuses be prohibited during years when the number of uninsured children and families in Kern County has increased from the previous year. Unemployment now exceeds 13% in Kern County and is well over 30% in many rural communities that Kern Healthy Systems currently serves. While other local non-profits are being forced to cut back on services due to reduced funding, KHS is distributing bonuses to staff that could go to provide health care to the residents of Kern County. KHS serves Medi-Cal and Healthy Families recipients and, as such, utilizes taxpayer funds in the administration and implementation of its programs. The stated mission of KHS is “dedicated to improving the health status of our members.”

According to estimates provided by the Children’s Health Initiative of Kern County, there has been a net increase of over 82,000 newly uninsured persons in the county since 2007, including both children and adults. As the Local Initiative, Kern Health Systems’ primary task is to ensure that existing and newly uninsured children and families have access to quality health care.

“As local families are hit by these challenging economic times, it is unimaginable that employees of this taxpayer funded entity should be awarded bonuses. Over \$600,000 has been allocated for bonuses that should actually go to serve the thousands more children and adults that are now living without the ability to see a doctor when they get ill or suffer an injury,” Supervisor Rubio noted. “The corporate greed on Wall Street has now made its way to Stockdale Highway—right here in our own backyard. Based on the skyrocketing numbers of uninsured residents living in Kern County, I simply don’t see how any bonuses can possibly be warranted at this time. With increased unemployment come more children and families living without health insurance. Those unfortunate individuals should be the focus of Kern Health Systems, not rewarding their best compensated employees with substantial raises or bonuses.”