



October 31, 2008

Dear Valued Partners,

Building Healthy Communities—places where children and youth are healthy, safe and ready to learn—has become The California Endowment’s overarching goal for our new strategic plan. Guided by a strategic vision that has been thoughtfully planned, we intend to make deep investments in selected places throughout the state beginning in 2010. It is our intention that this decade-long strategy will produce a greater impact on the health of California’s children, youth, families and communities.

As you may have read in our previous correspondence, these places will be announced in January 2009. While a majority of our funding commitments and partnerships will be focused on improving the local systems (including education, transportation and land use), the work that will be undertaken in these places is just one part of our overall strategy to improve the health of California’s children and families.

Just as important is our policy and advocacy work—both in and outside of these selected places—which will help ensure that health improvements are systemic and sustainable. Without meaningful changes to the larger health system, advances made in our selected places cannot be sustained or broadened to include the rest of California.

In our strategic vision, we intend to work with government, school districts, planning boards, businesses and other sectors to improve the health of communities by funding programs and partnerships that focus on prevention, integration and improved health systems. We’ve already supported the work of many partners who align with our strategic vision, working on all levels for changes to various systems. For example, we’ve supported one city’s groundbreaking concept of adding a health component to its General Plan so that future growth and development will foster elements such as “walkability” in neighborhoods, healthy food options in local stores, and open space and parks for children to exercise. We’ve collaborated with several county probation departments to ensure that young people in the juvenile justice system have their mental health needs addressed both in and out of detention. We’ve worked with school districts to ban sodas because of the increasing rates of childhood obesity and accompanying chronic diseases.

Efforts like these began on a smaller scale, but have ultimately grown to reach a greater number of children and families. It is our vision that policy work like this will continue and connect throughout the state during the next decade, creating a movement for change on a grander scale in Sacramento. And for that to be accomplished, we need to work with advocates both in and out of our targeted communities to ensure the vision of **Building Healthy Communities** comes to fruition. Ultimately, we envision our work supporting a movement for meaningful health systems reform throughout California.

If you have additional questions about The Endowment’s new strategic direction and community selection criteria, please visit our special **Building Healthy Communities** Web site (www.calendow.org/healthycommunities) for further information.

Thank you for your patience with the process and in sharing in our commitment to **Building Healthy Communities** in California.

Sincerely,

Daniel Boggan
Chair, Board of Directors

Robert K. Ross, M.D.
President and CEO

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