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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Orange County community unites around health access; forms an advocacy alliance**

*Irvine, CA, August 24, 2009* — The community forum hosted last Saturday, August 22 at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Hall led to a ground-breaking alliance. Organized by a group of local and regional stakeholders, including the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics (“the Coalition”), Latino Health Access, Orange County Labor Federation, Orange County Congregation Community Organization, Lestonnac Free Clinic, VNCOC Asian Health Clinic, Korean Community Services, Health Care Council of Orange County, and supported by AARP and the Prevention Institute, the forum galvanized grass-root commitment to advocate for and ensure health access for all.

The forum entitled, “Orange County Health In Crisis: Community Health Centers At The Frontlines,” led to a call for unity and deeper collaboration among community and religious leaders, social service organizations, labor unions, health advocacy groups, the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics, and local patient spokespersons. Curtis Crocker, Alondra Campos, and Ninh Nguyen shared their most personal struggles to accessing healthcare, inspiring genuine compassion, especially from Ed Gerber, President of the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics and Executive Director of Lestonnac Free Clinic.

“It is only through collaboration and compassion that we could, with our own efforts, address the growing community need,” Mr. Gerber said.

This call for a local alliance among community clinics, faith-based groups, labor groups, community-based organizations and social service agencies was echoed repeatedly during the forum.

“A local alliance has formed several times in the past to advocate for the public’s health,” said Felix Schwarz, Executive Director of Health Care Council. “This is the worst I have seen it as far as the need for healthcare. It is obvious to me we need to form an alliance once again.”

The clear need for a community alliance around health advocacy was heart-felt among long-time community leaders on the panel, such as Paty Maduena, Chair of Orange County Congregation Community Organization, Dr. Thuy Nguyen of VNCOC Asian Health, Ellen Ahn, Executive Director of Korean Community Services and America Bracho, CEO of Latino Health Access.

“Our only choice is to work with one voice,” said America Bracho. “With the leadership of the Coalition, we, together, need to define clear tasks in the next few weeks, and make our diverse voices come together as one. I was educated today of the critical need for all of us to support the 19 community clinics in our healthcare safety net.”

As a result, the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics will form a taskforce to tackle advocacy around access, affordability and advocacy. For more information, please contact Isabel Becerra, CEO of the Coalition at 949-486-0458 x224.

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### ***About the Coalition***

The Coalition Orange County Community Clinics (‘the Coalition’) is a consortium of 19 non-profit community clinics and health centers throughout Orange County (OC). OC does not have a county-owned hospital, therefore, the 19 Coalition members are the backbone of the healthcare ‘safety-net’ for the estimated 610,000 uninsured in OC. The Coalition represents 46 clinic sites operated by the members across OC that serve approximately 200,000 low-income, uninsured, and underserved patients annually. The Coalition’s primary objective is the full implementation of the patient centered medical home model. For more info, please visit [www.forhealthyoc.org](http://www.forhealthyoc.org).