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<http://www.coverallfamilies.org>

<http://www.piconetwork.org/news-media/coverage?issue=Health%20Care%20Access>

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Close to 200 Participate in Health Care & Immigration Forum; Local Members of Congress are No-Shows

Nearly two hundred Long Beach residents gathered at St. Anthony's Catholic Church Hall the evening of August 31 to be part of a community forum on health care & immigration reform. The evening heat did not stop people from congregations and ethnic communities across the city from coming together and sharing powerful stories about struggles and experiences with the country's broken health care and immigration systems.



The struggles of local residents to get health insurance are all too familiar. Imelda Becerra, a parishioner at St. Lucy's Catholic Church, was denied coverage twice after she changed jobs because of a pre-existing condition. Reina Mansilla, of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, has never received health

insurance even though she has worked as a long-term custodian for the Long Beach Unified School District for seven years. Ramon Mendoza, of St. Athanasius Catholic Church, spoke of paying \$900 per month in premiums and out-of-pocket expenses when he needed health care after being diagnosed with cancer.

The immigration stories were just as powerful and moving. One woman spoke of consistent abuse at the hands of employers – of being paid only \$5.00 after eight hours of work, of being locked in a packing plant for 14 hours without food or water, and of the constant threats of deportation. Another, a student at California State

University Long Beach, shared his story of coming to the United States with his parents as an 11-year-old because his seven-year-old sister was seriously ill and needed treatment only available in this country. Long Beach is the only home he knows, and for the past several years he has worked



minimum-wage jobs in order to pay for college. The DREAM Act would enable him to come out of the shadows. And Neary Nuth, a Cambodian mother from Mt. Carmel Cambodian Center, spoke of risking her life in the 1980s to get her son out of Cambodia, only to see him face deportation because of minor offenses here when he was a teenager.

Unfortunately, neither U.S. Rep. Laura Richardson nor U.S. Rep. Linda Sanchez attended the forum, even though both had been invited and Representative Richardson had indicated to ICO leaders when they met with her in late July her interest in participating. Moreover, neither office even sent staff. Forum participants were disappointed in the failure of their federal representatives to attend, and pledged to continue pressing them to do the right thing on health care and immigration reform.

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Sept. 15 National Call-In Day on Health Care and Immigration



PICO National Network is holding a National Call-In Day on Health Care & Immigration this Tuesday, September 15. This Call-In is a follow-up to ICO's

powerful and moving community forum last week on health care and immigration reform – a forum at which our federal legislators neglected to appear or even to send representatives.

ICO is urging faith community congregants from across Long Beach to take part. Please call your Congressional representative and our California Senators and urge them to stand firm and take positive action to reform our broken health care and immigration systems. The PICO National Network has set up a toll-free number that will connect you automatically to your U.S. representative's Washington, DC, office, at (866) 279-5474. Alternatively, you can call the local district offices. For a list of local numbers or more information, please contact the ICO office at (562) 984-2727, or info@greaterlongbeachico.org.

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Faith Community Joins for Prayer Vigil at West Long Beach Buddhist Temple



Khemara Buddhikaram, the Khmer Buddhist Temple on Long Beach's West Side, hosted an interdenominational prayer vigil on Aug. 26 as the West Long Beach community continues to confront threats to local air quality and community health.

Congregants and parishioners from several churches and temples joined for the vigil in the front parking lot of the Temple at



the corner of Willow and Webster abutting the existing ICTF railyard. Father Michael Roebert of St. Lucy's Catholic Church and Elder James Shaw of Lily of the Valley Church of God in Christ joined the monks of Khemara Buddhikaram and led a series of prayers and chants reflecting the differing faith traditions.

Dozens of local residents attended the vigil, the goal of which was to have the community praying together for health and guidance moving forward as they confront local railyard expansion plans and other port-related goods movement infrastructure projects.

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