

## Thank You Dr. Ruiz!

Money from higher tobacco taxes must go toward improving access to health care, Rep. Raul Ruiz wrote in a letter to California Gov. Jerry Brown.

The Monday, May 1 letter from Ruiz, D-La Quinta, is signed by 37 other California House Democrats, including reps. Mark Takano, D-Riverside, Pete Aguilar, D-Redlands and Norma Torres, D-Pomona.

Ruiz, an emergency-room doctor who presents the Pass, Hemet, San Jacinto and the Coachella Valley, is concerned that money from Prop. 56, which voters passed last November, is being spent on the state's general fund. Prop. 56 raised California's cigarette tax by \$2 a pack.

"As we continue to fight to ensure that all Americans

have access to high-quality affordable health care, it is crucial that funds from the passage of Proposition 56 ... are used for their original intent – to improve access to care in the Medicaid program by increasing Medi-Cal reimbursement rates and funding for Graduate Medical Education programs," the letter read.

Noting the shortage of primary care doctors in California, Ruiz wrote that the state must improve provider payment rates offered by Medi-Cal, the state's version of the federal Medicaid health insurance program for the poor.



**Congressman Raul Ruiz, MD** — US Representative for California District 36

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We have a severe shortage of physicians in California, which makes it difficult for Californians to see the doctor they need when they need it. Furthermore, California ranks 47th in the nation in Medi-Cal payments resulting in more physicians opting out of seeing Medi-Cal patients, making it even more difficult for those patients to get care. To put it in perspective, in our district alone there are regions with only one physician per 9000 residents, three times worse than the recommended standard. I wrote to Governor Brown urging to use Prop 56 funds as they were intended and not redirect them to the general fund. We should put the needs of patients first and fund the new Graduate Medical Education programs we need to adequately care for Californians and increase payments through Medi-Cal, so Medi-Cal patients don't have to struggle to see a physician. In fact, this is precisely how Californians indicated they want these funds used. This isn't a political issue, this is about standing up for patients and providing for the health and well-being of all Californians.



### Why Raul Ruiz is concerned about Jerry Brown's budget

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“We are concerned that your FY 2017-2018 state budget redirects Prop. 56 revenues away from Graduate Medical Education programs intended to address California’s physician shortages, as well as Medicaid payment increases intended to improve access for Medi-Cal patients,” the letter read.

“This threatens the success of California’s Medicaid expansion at a time when we’re fighting to sustain it against attempts by (President Donald Trump’s) Administration to decrease Medicaid funding.”

<http://www.pe.com/2017/05/02/why-raul-ruiz-is-concerned-about-jerry-browns-budget/>