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## **Desert Healthcare District Expansion to the Eastern Coachella Valley Moves to Ballot for November 6, 2018**

*Residents Will Vote This November on a One Coachella Valley Approach*

COACHELLA VALLEY – April 30, 2018 – On Thursday of last week, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), led by Chair Phil Williams, took the final step towards ensuring a November vote to expand the Desert Healthcare District and Foundation (DHCD/F) to include the Eastern Coachella Valley.

The Commissioner's unanimous vote on an expansion-related resolution paves the way for the measure to be placed on the Ballot by August 10 by the County of Riverside, and a vote of Eastern Coachella Valley residents on November 6.

"We greatly appreciate the work of passionate and dedicated residents, community leaders, and organizations from the Eastern Coachella Valley who presented to the LAFCO Board Thursday morning. Collectively representing the broader community, they expressed their concern for the lack of services in the East and showed strong support for the expansion of the Healthcare District. It was very clear that representation is of utmost importance in the early stages of expansion," said Les Zendle, M.D. DHCD/F Board President.

"I have lived and worked in the east end of the Coachella Valley for most of my life. As a result, I have witnessed the disparities that our community faces due to lack of resources and an imaginary border which has existed since the 1940's. The expansion of the Healthcare District will ensure that the much needed and long-awaited resources for health and mental health services are accessible and available to all the residents of the entire Coachella Valley," said Bea Gonzalez, Community Leader.

"I applaud LAFCO's unanimous vote in support of expanding the Desert Healthcare District. This is a significant step toward unifying the Coachella Valley and providing sorely needed services like mental health treatment centers, pediatric specialties, and veteran and senior wellness programs to our entire community," said Dr. Congressman Raul Ruiz.

"The approval of LAFCO to expand the Desert Healthcare District's boundary and services is the result of the overwhelming support by the non-profit sector, public institutions, elected officials and public at large; and a strong testimony of a unifying voice and vision in the Coachella Valley," said Sergio Carranza, Executive Director of Pueblo Unido CDC.

“If successful in November, AB2414 ensures that the newly expanded DHCD will provide East Valley residents with representation through the initial appointment of two Directors on the DHCD/F Board. It is critically important that the East Valley’s voice is heard in the DHCD/F Board decision-making through providing valuable input and perspective regarding the health of our community,” said Herb K. Schultz, DHCD/ F CEO.

The DHCD/F is a leader in the movement to address healthcare disparities and to lift the health of our entire community, but has been limited in its ability to address the needs of those not residing in the District.

“Although the current boundary of the DHCD/F is Cook Street, many people who live on one side of Cook --- work, eat, play and seek healthcare on the other side of Cook. Future progress in the Coachella Valley depends on initiatives that treat us as One Coachella Valley,” said Les Zendle, M.D. DHCD/F Board President.

“With all of us working together to ensure this vote this year, we secure a historic opportunity to connect 240,000 residents to vitally needed programs and services. The LAFCD action puts us one step closer to being one ally with a Healthcare District dedicated to providing health care from Palm Springs to North Shore. The valley-wide approach to health care and preventive care means working together. We will be able to help the many residents who need health care education, preventive care, and have one team working together to help those in need,” added Carole Rogers DHCD/F Vice President.

“I want to thank everyone who has worked with us to get us to this point. Desert Healthcare District, our entire county team from the Board of Supervisors, Public Health, our hospital, and my staff. None of this would have been possible without the legislation introduced and passed by our Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia. Tenet is also owed a great debt as well. Without Tenet’s willingness to work with the county and Desert Healthcare District, we would not have come this far. Our goal is in sight. Now it is in the hands of the voters in the Coachella Valley to decide,” said Supervisor V. Manuel Perez.

"Greater healthcare parity is on the horizon for our Coachella Valley region, following yesterday's successful determination. The voters will now decide," stated Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, author of AB 2414, legislation that authorized the expansion of the Desert Healthcare District boundary. "Our community's access to resources should never be restricted based on a zip code. I feel confident that the expansion will occur and bring healthcare services closer to where they are needed."

“The community input and support of the Desert Healthcare District’s Board of Directors has been critical in moving this expansion forward. I am glad our voters will now have the opportunity to support greater access to primary, behavioral and oral health care for the Valley's most vulnerable,” said Assemblymember Chad Mayes.

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**About Desert Healthcare District/Foundation**

The Desert Healthcare District is a local government agency formed in 1948 whose mission is to achieve optimal health at all stages of life for all District residents. The District includes more than 200,000 residents and encompasses the cities of Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert (west of Cook Street), and unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The District and its affiliated nonprofit Desert Healthcare Foundation, together, are one of the largest funders in the Coachella Valley, granting more than \$4 million annually to nonprofit, community-based and provider organizations. These funds are used to assist residents — especially the underserved — in accessing vitally needed resources, such as primary and behavioral healthcare, housing, food, and transportation resources.

**About Pueblo Unido CDC**

Pueblo Unido CDC responds to the needs and concerns of underrepresented rural communities of the Eastern Coachella Valley through actively engaging and fostering collaborative efforts among residents and other stakeholders to find viable solutions, leverage critical resources, and bring new opportunities to improve the quality of life for its residents.