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December 15, 2009

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Office of the Governor
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Restore the Every Woman Counts Program in California

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

We are writing on behalf of the Cancer Legal Resource Center, a national joint program of the Disability Rights Legal Center and Loyola Law School Los Angeles, to express our deep concern over the recent cuts to the *Every Woman Counts* program and we urge you to reverse this decision.

By way of introduction, the Disability Rights Legal Center (DRLC) has worked to implement the civil rights of people with disabilities for over 30 years. We are the oldest cross-disability legal advocacy organization in the country. Our mission is to promote the rights of people with disabilities and the public interest in, and awareness of, those rights by providing legal and related services.

The Cancer Legal Resource Center (CLRC) has provided over 153,000 people with free and confidential information and resources on cancer-related legal issues, including access to care, insurance, government benefits, estate planning, and employment. Please visit www.CancerLegalResourceCenter.org for more information.

In California alone, 21,700 women will have been diagnosed with breast cancer this year and more than 4,000 will have lost their battle with the disease.

Every Woman Counts provides a needed safety net to ensure woman who are uninsured, underinsured, and who do not qualify for Medi-Cal, get the screenings they need. If a woman has limited access to breast cancer screenings, it is doubtful her cancer will be detected at the earliest stage possible; therefore lowering her survival rate. When breast cancer is detected early, the 5-year relative survival rate is 98 percent, but declines to 23 percent if it has spread to other parts of the body.

Cuts to *Every Woman Counts* will shut the doors to breast cancer screenings services for 1.2 million eligible low-income, uninsured women for the first six months of 2010. Furthermore, if or when the doors reopen in July 2010, women from the age of 40-49 will no longer be served by this program, increasingly the likelihood that these women will be diagnosed at

later stages and their chances of survival will substantially decrease. The *Every Woman Counts* program saves the lives of women in California.

This decision comes too close to the controversial unveiling of the recommendations by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which is causing confusion for many women. Some people have interpreted these guidelines as a recommendation against mammography for women under 50. Susan G. Komen for the Cure and other cancer advocacy organizations have maintained their recommendations that women of average risk begin receiving an annual mammography starting at 40.

Governor Schwarzenegger, we respectfully urge you to rescind these program cuts to ensure the economic burdens facing the state do not fall on the backs of California's neediest women.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Paula D. Pearlman in black ink, featuring a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Paula D. Pearlman, Esq.
Executive Director,
Disability Rights Legal Center

Handwritten signature of Joanna L. Morales in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Joanna L. Morales, Esq.
Director,
Cancer Legal Resource Center