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March 21, 2003

My name is <sup>Stephen</sup> ~~James~~ Koetsier. I am the Administrator of Carson Valley Residential Care Center in Gardnerville, Nevada.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my support for the expansion of Group Care Waiver services. I believe it is urgently necessary to increase rates and create of levels of care as proposed.

My facility opened in mid-1997 with 57 beds. We limit the number of Group Care Waiver residents we accept at any given time to ten. The reward we receive for participating in this program is providing a desirable service to the needy. However, we lose money at the current rate and must deny access to most applicants. Those turned away are usually confined to costly institutionalization elsewhere, at taxpayer expense.

The cost of caring for residents in my facility increased 23% over the past three years; nearly 8% per year. In the past nine months my insurance increased 486%; State of Nevada license fees went up dramatically this year and, fuel and utilities continue to increase exponentially.

~~For the~~ The added cost of complying with the Nevada State Fire Marshal's office to construct a 12-unit addition to my facility is expected to be between \$70,000 and \$155,000.

All the while, we receive \$9.09 per day. A rate established ten years ago.

As tax-payer and a healthcare provider, I urge you to allocate the funds necessary to make available the affordable home-like Assisted Living alternative to Nevada's elderly.

Respectfully,

Stephen J. Koetsier, RFA



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF**

**Nevada Check up Budget  
Division of Health Care Financing & Policy**

**Assembly Committee on Ways and Means**

**Senate Committee on Finance**

**JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON K-12/HUMAN RESOURCES**

**March 21, 2003**

Chairman Rawson, Chairwoman Leslie and members of the Committee, for the record I am Jon Sasser, representing 3 non-profit civil legal services Programs: Washoe Legal Services, Nevada Legal Services and the Washoe County Senior Law Project. I also speak on this budget as the Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Nevada Covering Kids and Families Coalition. Our coalition has received a \$750,000 grant for four years from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to assist the state in enrolling children into the appropriate health insurance program.

My testimony today is primarily in support of the request for an increase in the Nevada Check Up caseload from approximately 25,500 entering the session to roughly 32,500 by the end of the biennium. A failure to fully fund this caseload growth may lead to a "capping" of this program. Capping the program would mean that parents seeking health insurance for qualified children would be told that the program is full. They would be required to either get on a waiting list or come back at a later time.

The Check Up is the Nevada name for our State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) established in Congress in 1997. Nearly 70 cents

on the dollar of the cost is now paid by the federal government to insure our low income children. These children would otherwise end up at the emergency rooms of county hospitals where their bills must be paid with 100% of local tax dollars. A cap would be especially painful to the already financial troubled University Medical Center in Las Vegas.

As you know virtually every state in the union is facing a fiscal crisis. Today, however, only one state (Utah) has dealt with its budget problems by capping its SCHIP enrollment. Only one other state, North Carolina is seriously discussing such a cap.

Although Nevada has made great strides since the Check Up program was put into place in the 1999 Session, we still have a long way to go. According to the March of Dimes, 106,000 or 17.3% of Nevada's children under the age of 19 were uninsured in 2001. We ranked 47th in the nation (tied with Louisiana). Only Arizona, New Mexico and Texas ranked lower, i.e. had a higher percent of their children without insurance.

A more recent survey of Nevada conducted by the Great Basin Primary Care Association concludes:

*The study affords Nevadans some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that Nevada's percent of uninsured remains consistently higher than the national averages. The good news is that there are fewer persons without health insurance in 2002 versus 2001 (17.8% versus 15.8% respectively or a 2 percent decrease).<sup>1</sup> Over half this decrease in the statewide numbers can be attributed to the increase in enrollment in the Nevada Check-Up children's health insurance program.*

The study shows that despite our progress, approximately 112,000 Nevada children were uninsured as of July 2002. That number would include 33,471 children below 100% of the federal poverty level (eligible for Medicaid) and 38,581 between 100% - 200% of the federal poverty level (presumably eligible for Check Up).

In order to enroll these children successfully it is also important to insure adequate staffing for the program. Because when applying for Check Up a child may also be asked to apply for Medicaid where a preliminary assessment indicates that the child may be financially eligible for that program, it is also important to hire adequate eligibility workers for the Welfare Division in order to avoid delays.

The Covering Kids and Families Coalition urges your support for this budget. There is no fat here to justify a failure to enact a tax increase.