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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 18, 2008

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS JOINS COUNTY ORGANIZED HEALTH SYSTEM (COHS)

COHS will facilitate medical treatment for County Medi-Cal beneficiaries

MERCED – The Merced County Board of Supervisors voted today to approve an ordinance which will allow Merced County to join the Central Coast Alliance for Health (the Alliance), a County Organized Health System (COHS), in partnership with Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. The COHS is designed to improve health outcomes for local Medi-Cal patients, with case managers and other staff here in the County working with local providers and clients to manage their care locally and improve services.

“Today’s action by the Board of Supervisors allows the State Department of Health to move forward with the COHS model of managed care for Medi-Cal in Merced County,” commented John Volanti, Director of the Merced County Department of Public Health. “Our partnership with Santa Cruz and Monterey counties is intended to provide local control of a State program, which we hope will improve local access, quality and efficiency for Merced County Medi-Cal beneficiaries and improve the health of our community overall.”

The Alliance was established in 1996, and currently serves more than 95,000 members. Under the agreement, the Alliance will pay for the implementation and development costs to incorporate Merced County and its Medi-Cal beneficiaries into the COHS. The Alliance has already successfully expanded into a multi-county COHS in recent years. The Alliance is also well regarded throughout the state, having placed in the top two Medi-Cal plans in the state for the last four years.

The tri-county COHS will be governed by a 21-member Board, including seven members from Merced County, consisting of a member of the Board of Supervisors, the County’s health director, two Health Care providers, one hospital representative, and two Community members, one of whom is required to be a former or current Medi-Cal beneficiary. The COHS Board will initially be responsible for developing the County’s provider network, notifying members of the change in services, and working with the State to approve the service area expansion. The ordinance passed today will take effect in 30 days, the new Board will convene in Spring 2009, and services provided through the tri-county agreement will begin in the Fall 2009.