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Groups Criticize CVS for Failing to Provide Equal Treatment for All of Los Angeles' Communities

Community Leaders Call On CVS to Provide Equal Services for All of Los Angeles' Communities

Long Beach, Calif. – Community leaders, consumer advocates and activists protested outside a Long Beach CVS store today to call on CVS to provide equal access to its goods and services for all communities. The groups contend that CVS, the nation's largest retail pharmacy chain, underserves low-income communities and communities of color across the country.

Representatives from the Orange County chapter of NOW, Black Women for Wellness, the Santa Ana Senior Club, the North Long Beach Community Prayer Center and Cure CVS took the stage this afternoon to call on CVS to provide equal access to its goods and services for all of Los Angeles' communities. Surveys of CVS stores in greater Los Angeles found that the company locates fewer stores per person in low-income communities and communities of color, is less likely to provide services like 24-hour access or Minute Clinics in these areas, and is more likely to take anti-theft measures in those communities.

The groups speaking out today are part of a growing national coalition calling on CVS to treat all communities equally.

Less Access to CVS Stores in Low-Income Communities and Communities of Color

Nationwide, CVS operates fewer stores per person in the least affluent areas than in the most affluent, and fewer stores per person in areas with a majority of residents of color compared with majority-white areas. In greater Los Angeles, there are nearly two-thirds more CVS stores per person in majority white communities than in areas with larger populations of people of color.

"We have a richness of diversity in our City and the 7th District that is apparently not rich enough for CVS," said Long Beach Councilmember Tonia Reyes Uranga. "The City has aggressively sought to locate a pharmacy on the Westside to serve a large elderly and working class neighborhood. We would welcome a CVS to our neighborhood, but they have not shown any interest in serving this predominantly minority community which I am proud to represent. I call upon CVS to start valuing all communities equally by opening and properly maintaining stores in communities of color."

CVS 24-hour stores and MinuteClinics: Convenient for some

CVS is far more likely to allocate time- and money-saving conveniences like 24-hour stores and in-store medical clinics in suburbs and majority-white neighborhoods.

Nearly a quarter of greater Los Angeles stores are open 24 hours a day, but not one of the 11 stores in communities where 80 percent of residents are people of color offer these convenient hours. Four of the 10 stores in areas that are less than 10 percent people of color are open 24 hours.

CVS operates 40 MinuteClinics in greater Los Angeles, but there are three times as many per person in majority white areas as in other areas.

“Low-income communities are precisely the type of communities that lack access to quality, affordable health care and would benefit from services like MinuteClinics,” said Alvin Hanson, Santa Ana Senior Club member and minister the New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church. “The fact that CVS locates the vast majority of its clinics in predominantly white areas shows a disrespect for the people of color of Los Angeles.”

Locked Condom Cases in Communities of Color

In CVS stores across the country, customers will find condoms locked behind glass cases. This practice has been criticized by reproductive health advocates for creating a barrier to condom access, but even more disturbing is where these cases are located: condoms are most often locked in communities of color.

Recent surveys found that more than one sixth of CVS stores surveyed in greater Los Angeles (7 of 41) kept condoms under lock and key. Three of four stores surveyed in areas with the largest communities of color had condoms locked, and almost one third of CVS stores in areas with the largest Latino populations kept condoms locked. Stores in areas with the fewest Latino residents or residents of color had no condoms locked.

These statistics are particularly startling given that Long Beach’s AIDS incidence rate per capita is more than twice the rate of Los Angeles County and nearly three times the rate for the State of California. Among the AIDS cases reported last year in Long Beach, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians combined make up a majority of new cases.

For more information visit www.CureCVSNow.org

Cure CVS is an initiative by Change to Win and partner organizations to reform the drugstore industry, starting with CVS, the country’s leading provider of prescription drugs and largest drugstore chain. By joining concerned citizen groups with the six million members of Change to Win unions, Cure CVS aims to ensure that CVS provides equal access across all communities and income levels to its stores and services, offers fair and accurate prices, provides quality products and services, protects customers’ privacy and puts quality pharmacy care first.

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