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Alameda County
Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District

For Immediate Release
Press Release

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Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson Addresses Poverty Forum at UC Berkeley

Supervisor Keith Carson was a keynote speaker at the 3rd Annual Berkeley Poverty and Homelessness Symposium on Sunday, April 10, 2011 at Wheeler Hall on the UC Berkeley campus. The forum addressed the root causes of poverty, the issues that perpetuate poverty and homelessness in Alameda County, and actions that can be taken to alleviate poverty and homelessness. The event was hosted by The Suitcase Clinic, Cal Habitat for Humanity, CalPIRG and Cal Corps Public Service Center.

Supervisor Carson's speech outlined sobering statistics about poverty rates in the U.S. and around the world and concrete steps being taken in Alameda County to address a growing need for safety net services.

Worldwide, 1 billion children live in poverty, reports GlobalIssues.Org. According to the U.N. World Summit on Social Development "Copenhagen Declaration," this means that 1 in 2 children suffer from a lack of "basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information." According to the U.S Census, children represent a disproportionate share of the poor in the United States; they are 25 percent of the total population, but 35 percent of the poor population. In 2008, 15.45 million children, or 20.7 percent, were poor.

The estimated total number of people in poverty in the U.S. in 2009 was 43.6 million, the largest number in the 51 years for which poverty estimates have been published, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. It is widely known that poverty hits women and people of color at disproportionate rates.

The cost to the United States with regards to the effects of childhood poverty alone are estimated at \$500 billion a year, in the form of lost economic productivity as children become adults, and the cost of higher crime rates and poor health conditions later in life, according to a 2007 report called "The Center for American Progress Task Force on Poverty."

The economic downturn and the State's \$26.6 billion deficit has hit Alameda County hard. The County's unemployment rate is hovering around 12%, while the application rate for CalWORKs, the cash aid program for families with children, averages about 1500 cases per month, a 15% increase from a year ago. According to RealtyTrac's "Year-End 2010 U.S. Foreclosure Market Report," foreclosure filings were reported on a record 2.8 million properties in 2010. Alameda County reached its foreclosure peak in 2008 with over 8,000 filings; the 2010 number was just over 6,000, an improvement but still high compared to the mere hundreds of foreclosures filed in 2005, according to the Alameda County Clerk/Recorder's Office.

Even Berkeley is not immune. Approximately 20% of the population in Berkeley lives in poverty, including 14.2% of people under the age of 18, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Supervisor Carson remarked that Alameda County employs a comprehensive and innovative approach to poverty that emphasizes the social determinants of poverty, which lead to poor health outcomes. The County takes part in "Place Matters," a national initiative of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Health Policy

Institute designed to improve the health of participating communities by addressing social conditions that lead to poor health. For many years, Alameda County has published a health status report that shows that where you live, how much money you make and the color of your skin directly impacts how healthy you are. “Poverty is clearly a health indicator,” Supervisor Carson noted. “For the past five years, my office has been working with the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency to implement the Place Matters initiative. We are making progress in identifying factors determining poverty and health inequity and concrete policies we can enact to reduce those inequities.”

Research has shown that no amount of medical care will solve this inequity. This is not a medical issue, this is a social issue. The only way to address the problem is with upstream changes, for example policy changes that improve wages and working standards and guarantee access to school for everyone including higher education. In Alameda County for example, a \$12,500 increase in annual income adds one year of life expectancy.

“To address the root causes of poverty,” Supervisor Carson stated, “people must be empowered through education, opportunities for growth, supportive social networks and living wage jobs.”

The County has been creating innovative new strategies to address the needs of low income families through more intensive wrap-around services. Some examples include “Another Road to Safety,” a program that helps children and families in crisis; Employment Training through the Social Services Agency; and the Peralta Achievement Collaborative, a partnership with our community colleges to develop career paths that lead to living wages in emerging industries.

[For more information about Place Matters, please click here.](#)

[For more information about the Alameda County Social Services Agency, please click here.](#)

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Please see separate email for Dropbox folder with pictures or call for the files.

Photo 1: Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson addresses students, staff and community members at the 3rd Annual Berkeley Poverty and Homelessness Symposium at UC Berkeley.

Photo 2: Participants at the 3rd Annual Berkeley Poverty and Homelessness Symposium listen to Supervisor Carson’s speech.

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson represents the Fifth District, which includes Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and the communities of West Oakland, North Oakland, Rockridge, Grand Lake, Fruitvale, and the Dimond District.