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**KAISER PERMANENTE ADOPTS SWEEPING PLANS TO IMPROVE
ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH VISION DISABILITIES**

Oakland, CA – *February 2, 2016* –The California Council of the Blind (CCB) and Kaiser Permanente today announced a historic agreement to further enhance the accessibility of health services for California patients with vision disabilities.

Highlights of the agreement include:

- Adoption of new policies and practices regarding alternative formats (such as braille, audio, large print, and talking prescription labels) that Kaiser Permanente will provide to its patients who are blind or have other vision disabilities;
- Ongoing training of new and existing Kaiser Permanente personnel on best practices for interacting with people with vision disabilities;
- Improved methods of providing individuals with vision disabilities with equivalent information and privacy in pharmacies and laboratories;
- Evaluating the accessibility of all touch-screen kiosks to individuals with vision disabilities and undertaking efforts to prioritize making these kiosks accessible; and

- Accelerated removal of architectural barriers affecting persons with vision disabilities.

This agreement is the result of negotiations between Kaiser Permanente, the California Council of the Blind, Disability Rights Advocates (DRA), Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho (GBDH), and three Kaiser patients with vision disabilities: Deborah Armstrong, Nelly Emerson, and Lisamaria Martinez.

Jeff Thom, CCB's president, reflected on the improvements achieved through these negotiations: "We applaud Kaiser Permanente for its commitment to provide patients with vision disabilities enhanced access to health information in alternative formats and improved means to communicate with their doctors, as well as training of medical personnel, including laboratory and pharmacy staff, on how to interact with patients with visual impairments."

Lisamaria Martinez, a Kaiser Permanente patient who is blind, decided that it was important to participate in these negotiations because "full and quick access to medical information is essential for the well-being and independence of all patients who seek health care. This agreement ensures that Kaiser Permanente's patients with vision disabilities have better access to health care information that is available to all patients."

"We are delighted to have worked so cooperatively with the California Council for the Blind, DRA and GBDH to develop this comprehensive enhancement of our services and access for our California members and patients who have vision disabilities," said Bill Caswell, senior vice president of operations, Kaiser Permanente Southern California. "This is another step forward in our ongoing efforts to address disparities by enhancing access and services, and promoting a diverse and culturally competent health care workforce."

"Kaiser has agreed to groundbreaking improvements in healthcare access for its members with vision disabilities," said Larry Paradis, the Executive Director at DRA who helped negotiate the agreement. "As the largest healthcare provider in California, Kaiser is setting the bar for its competitors."

"We are very pleased with this historic agreement and believe it provides model policies for healthcare providers across the country to follow and adopt," said Linda M. Dardarian, partner at GBDH.

The detailed agreement is available at www.dralegal.org.

About California Council of the Blind (CCB)

The California Council of the Blind is a non-profit and the largest consumer membership and advocacy organization composed of people who are blind or visually impaired in the state. Since 1934, the mission of the CCB has been to gain full independence and equality of opportunity for all blind and visually impaired Californians.

About Disability Rights Advocates (DRA)

Disability Rights Advocates is a non-profit legal center which, for over twenty years, has specialized in high-impact class action litigation and structured negotiations on behalf of people with all types of disabilities. DRA practices nationally and has offices in Berkeley, California and New York City.

About Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho (GBDH)

Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho is an Oakland, California based law firm which represents plaintiffs nationally in complex and class action litigation, including civil rights, employment discrimination, wage and hour, disability access, consumer, and other public interest class actions.

About Kaiser Permanente

Kaiser Permanente is committed to helping shape the future of health care. We are recognized as one of America's leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans. Founded in 1945, Kaiser Permanente has a mission to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve more than 10 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia. Care for members and patients is focused on their total health and guided by their personal physicians, specialists and team of caregivers. Our expert and caring medical teams are empowered and supported by industry-leading technology advances and tools for health promotion, disease prevention, state-of-the-art care delivery and world-class chronic disease management. Kaiser Permanente is dedicated to care innovations, clinical research, health education and the support of community health. For more information, go to: kp.org/share.

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