October 15, 2008

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

We are deeply disturbed by your veto of funding for the University of California Miguel Contreras Labor Program. This veto removes funds for programs that fulfill critical needs for working families and businesses across California. Moreover, it threatens academic freedom by singling out, without any academic review, one program within UC for elimination.

The Miguel Contreras Labor Program, which includes the Institutes for Research on Labor and Employment and Centers for Labor Research and Education at UC Berkeley and UCLA as well as the UC-wide Labor and Employment Research Fund, deserves state support on its own merits. It has generated high quality research on labor and employment on all of the UC campuses. This research is widely used by those in labor, business, and public policy who work to create and improve jobs in California, as well as scholars the world over. The Contreras Program also runs educational programs in UC and in the labor and business communities. Financial support for graduate students has helped to train new generations of labor and employment professionals and scholars, magnifying the statewide impact. As you well know, working families are struggling and the workplace is being transformed by dramatic, sometimes worrisome trends from offshoring to technological change. The work of the Contreras Program is thus more needed than ever.

We understand the need to balance the budget in difficult times and that UC should expect to make sacrifices along with other state programs. However, out of the $3 billion UC budget, the only item you vetoed was the $5.4 million Contreras Program. Given the tiny amount of savings, it is hard to understand this action as other than politically motivated. We see this as unwarranted political interference in the academic activities of the University of California. It violates the basic principle of the freedom to speak out and conduct research even on controversial topics; this freedom is a cornerstone of the vital, world-class university California needs.

We strongly urge you to restore funds to the University of California Miguel Contreras Labor Program this year, and support its funding in the future.

Sincerely,
UC Berkeley

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