

For Immediate Release

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Tel: 415.553.2216, ihill@kqed.org**Diagnosis of Debt****KQED and the Center for Health Reporting explore
the epidemic of medical debt**

SAN FRANCISCO, September 12, 2011—Medical debt is an epidemic that in 2010 affected one in four American adults younger than 65, an all-time high for the country. Beginning today, KQED Public Radio's statewide news service, *The California Report*, in collaboration with the California HealthCare Foundation Center for Health Reporting will begin a four-part series on the crushing cost of medical debt - from the patients struggling with doctors' bills to debt collectors who are behaving like bounty hunters.

Diagnosis of Debt reports are scheduled to air on *The California Report* today and on September 19, 26 and Oct. 3. *The California Report* is heard on 29 radio stations across the state. In the San Francisco Bay Area, *The California Report* airs on KQED 88.5 FM; in Sacramento, it is broadcast on KQEI 89.3 FM.

Audio for the radio stories, text versions of the stories, photos and other content is online at californiareport.org.

In the opening report by Kelley Weiss, listeners will meet an unemployed man in San Francisco who was hit by a car and now has more than \$70,000 in medical debt, despite having health insurance. Future reports will go inside the billing department of a Sacramento hospital and to a high-finance operation where collection rates are not what you might expect. Listeners and web readers also will learn about state and federal regulations designed to protect patients and they will get tips on how to stay out of debt.

"Medical debt is becoming ruinous for millions of Americans," said David Westphal, editor of the Center for Health Reporting. "And it can happen so quickly. An unexpected illness or an accident, combined with inadequate insurance, can result in tens of thousands of dollars in medical debt."

Diagnosis of Debt is the first major collaboration between KQED, the nation's most-listened-to public radio station, and the Center for Health Reporting, an innovative new venture in journalism that is taking aim at the most fundamental health-care issues facing Californians. The center operates out of the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism and is funded by the California HealthCare Foundation, with a three-year, \$3.285 million grant.

"We are excited to be working with the Center for Health Reporting. And we're enthusiastic about the opportunity it provides to present more in-depth reporting and analysis of vital health issues to *The California Report's* online news readers and radio listeners," remarked Jo Anne Wallace, Vice President and General Manager, KQED Public Radio.

For more information about the Center for Health Reporting, go to centerforhealthreporting.org.

About KQED

KQED (kqed.org) has served Northern California for more than 50 years and is affiliated with NPR and PBS. KQED owns and operates public television stations KQED 9 (San Francisco/Bay Area), KQED Plus (San Jose/Bay Area), and KQET 25 (Watsonville/Monterey); KQED Public Radio (88.5FM San Francisco and 89.3FM Sacramento); the interactive platforms kqed.org and KQEDnews.org; and KQED Education. KQED Public Television, one of the nation's most-watched public television stations, is the producer of local and national series such as *QUEST*; *Check, Please! Bay Area*; *This Week in Northern California*; *Truly CA*; and *Essential Pépin*. KQED's digital television channels include 9HD, KQED Life, KQED World, KQED Kids, and KQED V-me, and are available 24/7 on Comcast. KQED Public Radio, home of *Forum* with Michael Krasny and *The California Report*, is one of the most-listened-to public radio stations in the nation with an award-winning news and public affairs program service delivering more than eighteen local newscasts daily. KQED Interactive provides KQED's cross-platform news service, KQEDnews.org, as well as offers several popular local blogs, video and audio podcasts, and a live radio stream at kqed.org. KQED Education brings the impact of KQED to thousands of teachers, students, parents, and the general public through workshops, community screenings, and multimedia resources.