

SB 4 (Lara): Allowing All to Buy into Covered California

Another Step to #Health4All Regardless of Immigration Status

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The 2015-16 state budget, signed in to law in June 2015, will extend Medi-Cal coverage to all low-income California children and youthⁱ regardless of immigration status. [SB 4 \(Lara\)](#) would build on this progress by allowing all Californians, regardless of immigration status, to purchase health coverage through Covered California using their own money. SB 4 takes another step toward the goal of #Health4All.



The Need for SB 4

The Affordable Care Act explicitly excludes undocumented immigrants from receiving health coverage through federally funded programs including Covered California, the state's insurance market exchange. This means some California adults cannot buy health coverage through Covered California, even if they use their own money to pay for it.

Though California recently made the investment to extend Medi-Cal to all children and youth, regardless of where they were born, the work towards health for all is not over. While some counties provide some care to undocumented adults through their safety-net systems, too many do not.ⁱⁱ As a result of these gaps, the uninsured live sicker, die younger, and are one emergency away from financial ruin. This reality has health and economic impacts on whole families and communities. Our health care system and economy work better when everyone—children *and* adults regardless of immigration status—has access to primary and preventive care which prevent medical debt and bankruptcy.

How SB 4 will move California towards #Health4All

SB 4 seeks to allow all Californians, regardless of immigration status, to purchase coverage through Covered California with their own money by requiring the state to apply for a federal [Section 1332 waiver](#) (a formal request to the federal government)ⁱⁱⁱ. If the federal Section 1332 waiver is granted, immigrant families above the Medi-Cal income limit will be allowed to purchase health care coverage on Covered California. This bill will allow all Californians to make apples-to-apples comparisons between standardized health plan options, and get enrollment assistance through Covered CA navigators, website, and call centers. Most undocumented immigrants are part of mixed status families that may include family members who are U.S. citizens or lawfully present immigrants and thus eligible for financial assistance. Covered California should be able to provide health insurance options for the entire family, even if some family members can get financial help and others cannot.



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Key Points

No one should suffer or die from a treatable condition because of where they were born.

It's better for everyone when we treat preventable conditions early, rather than resort to emergency rooms. It doesn't reflect California's values, and it simply doesn't make sense, to lock a whole population of California adults out of health care.

SB 4 builds on California's tradition of immigrant inclusion and allows immigrant families to find coverage through Covered California's "one-stop shop."

Through SB 4, California can take a step in the right direction by removing the exclusion of undocumented immigrants from Covered California. Hundreds of thousands of mixed status families could be better helped if Covered CA were accessible to the entire family. Furthermore, SB 4 would promote health coverage by building trust between immigrant communities and health providers and agencies.

Covering adults is good for kids and our health care system.

When adults have access to affordable health care, their kids are more likely to get coverage and preventive care.^{iv}

The Bottom Line

SB 4 seeks to remove an unjust exclusion from Covered California, by allowing undocumented immigrants to buy into coverage with their families and community.

Note: A previous version of SB 4 would have allowed all low-income adults to enroll in Medi-Cal regardless of immigration status, if funding is available. This is now being addressed in SB 10 (Lara). SB 10 is a two-year bill and is expected move through the legislative process in 2016.

ⁱ Eligible children and youth will be able to receive Medi-Cal coverage through this expansion until they turn 19 years old.

ⁱⁱ Health Access, Re-Orienting the Safety Net for the Remaining Uninsured, March, 2015. http://www.health-access.org/images/pdfs/county_safety_net_survey_reportupdate_march15final.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Understanding the ACA's State Innovation ("1332") Waivers, February, 2015. : <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=5265>.

^{iv} Sara Rosenbaum, et al., "Parental Health Insurance Coverage as Child Health Policy: Evidence from the Literature," Department of Health Policy, George Washington University, June 2007. http://publichealth.gwu.edu/departments/healthpolicy/CHPR/downloads/Parental_Health_Insurance_Report.pdf