

Senate Bill 974 (Lara): Health4All Act

California's uninsured rate is at a historic low of 6.8% thanks to our robust implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which has brought health coverage to an additional 7 million Californians.¹ In 2015, California made a critical investment to provide comprehensive full-scope Medi-Cal to all children, regardless of where they were born. Unfortunately, federal law explicitly and unjustly excludes undocumented immigrants from receiving health coverage through Medi-Cal, and from selecting a health plan or receiving subsidies for Covered California. As a result, undocumented adults are still left without comprehensive health care.

The California Immigrant Policy Center and Health Access California are advancing SB 974, the Health4All Act, which removes an eligibility barrier to full-scope Medi-Cal for low-income undocumented adults. SB 974 builds on the gains California has made and takes the Golden State one step closer to universal coverage. Ensuring that everyone has access to health care, regardless of their immigration status, is a key part of any strategy to reach this goal. California is stronger when everyone has access to health care. We're all in this together, and we're all healthier when all are covered.

Health4All Moves California Closer to Universal Coverage

Over the last year, we have witnessed a barrage of attacks on health care at the federal level, including multiple efforts to repeal the ACA, the elimination of the individual mandate penalty in the federal tax bill, and various administrative actions that undermine access to care. California has worked to shield our state from these attacks to the extent possible.

California must continue to champion bold and inclusive policies that support the health of our communities and work against xenophobic federal policies. **Of the nearly 3 million Californians who remain uninsured, 58% are undocumented adults.**² Health4All removes a barrier to health access due to immigration status and brings California closer to ensuring that every Californian has comprehensive, affordable, and accessible care. SB 974 would provide Medi-Cal to low-income undocumented adults whose incomes are at or below 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL). This means that an undocumented adult in a single-person household would be eligible if their income is \$16,643³ or less.



California already provides near-universal coverage for children, thanks in large part to the Health4All Kids program, which was implemented on May 16, 2016 and provides undocumented children an opportunity to get affordable health coverage. The 2015-16 state budget trailer bill ([SB 75](#)) included an investment to expand full-scope Medi-Cal to all low-income children under the age of 19, regardless of immigration status. **Under the implementation of Health4All Kids, over 200,000 undocumented children have received comprehensive care.**⁴ This expansion was possible thanks to the efforts of directly impacted individuals, advocates, and legislative leaders. SB 974 brings our state closer to universal coverage by building on the success of Health4All Kids and ensuring that full-scope Medi-Cal is available to all low-income undocumented adults.

¹ Covered California. (2017). *Covered California Announces Continued Strong Enrollment and Reminds Consumers That Penalty Remains in Place Through 2018*. Retrieved from: www.coveredca.com/news/

² http://www.itup.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Remaining-Uninsured_Fact-Sheet-11-21-17.pdf

³ Program Eligibility by Federal Poverty Level <https://www.coveredca.com/PDFs/FPL-chart.pdf>

⁴ Department of Health Care Services. (2017). *SB 75 Transitions and New Enrollees by County*. Retrieved from: http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Documents/SB75/SB75_Enrollees_County_120417.pdf

The Impact of Being Uninsured & Undocumented

Undocumented and uninsured Californians live sicker, die younger, and are one emergency away from financial ruin because they do not have access to comprehensive health coverage. Under current law, low-income undocumented adults are eligible for emergency-only Medi-Cal but not for primary or preventive care offered through full-scope Medi-Cal. Though some California counties provide some care to undocumented adults through their safety-net systems, many do not.⁵ **This reality has tremendous health and economic impacts on families and our state where 1 in 6 of all California children have at least one undocumented parent.**⁶ Our health care system works better when all California residents, regardless of immigration status, have access to health care.

Key Points

- **Medi-Cal for low-income undocumented adults builds on the success of Health4All Kids** and strengthens our state by ensuring that every Californian has access to health care.
- **Health4All continues California's well-established tradition of covering immigrant populations in Medi-Cal** who are excluded from federal programs. California has provided health coverage to newly qualified immigrants (green card holders in the U.S. for less than five years) and immigrants with deferred action status (such as DACA recipients).
- **No one should suffer or die from a treatable condition because of where they were born.** Our health care system is stronger and more cost-efficient when we detect and treat preventable conditions early, rather than force patients to resort to the emergency room for care. Including all Californians in our health system, including undocumented immigrants who are our fellow students, family members and colleagues, is essential to growing a strong economy and building a vibrant and inclusive California.

The Bottom Line

We invest in the health of our state when we invest in health coverage for low-income undocumented adults, who are a fundamental part of our workforce and communities. SB 974 moves California and the nation closer to universal coverage by removing an eligibility barrier to full-scope Medi-Cal to all low-income adults who call California home.

For more information, please contact:

- Betzabel Estudillo, Senior Manager of Health & Public Benefits at the California Immigrant Policy Center: bestudillo@caimmigrant.org.
- Myri Valdez, Legislative and Policy Advocate at Health Access California: mvaldez@health-access.org.

⁵ Health Access California, 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

⁶ <http://dornsife.usc.edu/csii/undocumentedca/>