

SB 1418 (Lara): Expanding Full-Scope Medi-Cal to Undocumented Adults

The Affordable Care Act explicitly and unjustly excludes undocumented immigrants from receiving health coverage through federally funded programs including Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program. Though California recently made the investment to extend comprehensive full-scope Medi-Cal to all children and youth, regardless of where they were born, the fight to ensure that *everyone* has access to health care is not over. Undocumented California adults are still left without comprehensive health coverage options. We also know that covering parents is good for families and for our health care system. When parents have access to affordable health care, kids are more likely to get coverage and preventive care.

Supported by the California Immigrant Policy Center and Health Access California, [SB 1418](#) (Lara) would expand full-scope Medi-Cal coverage to all low-income adults, regardless of immigration status, upon availability of funding through the state budget.

SB 1418 Moves California Closer to Health For All

SB 1418 removes a critical barrier to health access due to immigration status and brings California closer to ensuring that every Californian has comprehensive, affordable, and accessible care. This bill expands full-scope (or "comprehensive") Medi-Cal to low-income undocumented adults whose income are at or below 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL). This means that an undocumented adult in a [family of four](#) would be eligible if the family's annual income is \$33,534 or less.



The Health4All Kids expansion begins May 16, 2016, providing many undocumented children the opportunity for affordable health care coverage. This expansion was due to the budget and legislative efforts of directly-impacted individuals, advocates, and legislative leaders. On June 24, 2015, Governor Jerry Brown signed the 2015-2016 state budget trailer bill ([SB 75](#)), which included an initial investment of \$40M to expand full-scope Medi-Cal to all low-income undocumented children under the age of 19. On October 9, 2015, Governor Jerry Brown signed [SB 4](#) (Lara), which strengthened this expansion by ensuring that undocumented children enrolled in restricted-scope Medi-Cal could transition to full-scope Medi-Cal seamlessly. Building upon the progress of SB 4 and SB 75, immigrant and health advocates are working together to pass SB 10 and SB 1418, which will give every Californian access to our state marketplace, Covered California, and expand full-scope Medi-Cal to low-income undocumented adults.

The Financial and Health Effects of Being Uninsured and Undocumented

Undocumented immigrants do not have access to comprehensive, affordable benefits through publicly funded health coverage programs. Low-income undocumented immigrants are eligible for emergency-only Medi-Cal but not for primary or preventive care available through full-scope Medi-Cal. While some California counties provide some care to undocumented adults through their safety-net systems, many do not.¹ As a result, undocumented and uninsured Californians live sicker, die younger, and are one emergency away from financial ruin. This reality has tremendous health and economic impacts on families and our state. Our health care system works better when everyone—children *and* adults regardless of immigration status—has access to primary and preventive care to prevent medical debt and bankruptcy.

Key Points

SB 1418 builds on California's tradition of immigrant inclusion. By expanding full-scope Medi-Cal to all low-income Californians, immigrant families will have the opportunity to access health care coverage regardless of where someone is born.

- SB 1418 expands California's well-established tradition of covering some immigrant populations in Medi-Cal who are excluded from federal programs. Examples include recent documented immigrants, including people with a "green card" for 5 years or less, and immigrants with "deferred action" status.
- Even when the new deportation relief programs are in effect, and even after the children's Medi-Cal expansion goes into effect, a substantial number of California's undocumented adults will be left out of these programs. **That's why passing SB 1418 is so important.**

No one should suffer or die from a treatable condition due to where they were born.

California is stronger when all Californians are covered. Our health care system is stronger when we detect and treat preventable conditions early, rather than require patients to resort to emergency room visits. Further, excluding undocumented immigrants from health care does not reflect California's values and it simply does not make sense to shut out a whole population of California adults from health care coverage.

The Bottom Line

Investing in immigrant adults is investing in the health of our state, as immigrants are a fundamental part of our workforce and communities. SB 1418 moves California and the nation closer to Health for All, by expanding full-scope Medi-Cal to all low-income adults who call California home.

¹ 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.