

Build Back Better: What's at Stake for Health in the Central Valleyⁱ

The transformative federal “Build Back Better” bill includes health care investments that could dramatically lower costs and improve access to care for all Californians. It has the opportunity to lower prescription drug costs, keep health coverage affordable, and close harmful gaps in Medicare benefits for Central Valley residents. While Congressional negotiations continue on the size and scope of the bill, here is what's at stake for the Central Valley if the initial and most robust version of the act was passed and implemented.

Lower Prescription Drug Costs

The excessively high cost of prescription drugs in the United States is a health and economic burden on individuals and families. 75% of California voters believe the prices of prescription drugs are unreasonable. In the House version of Build Back Better, reforms to prescription drug policy are estimated to save hundreds of billions of dollars nationally, and as much as \$6.4 billion in California. The biggest change would be to allow Medicare to negotiate for fair prescription drug prices, and extending those lower negotiated prices to private insurers to make sure everyone can benefit. The idea is wildly popular – 91% of registered voters in California support it. **People in the Central Valley stand to save as much as \$542 million in prescription drug costs in just one year if the Build Back Better proposal becomes law.**ⁱⁱ

Keeping Covered California Affordable

As a result of the temporary help provided by the American Rescue Plan in 2020, Californians who have health coverage through Covered California are receiving unprecedented financial assistance to reduce their monthly premiums. Right now, over 700,000 lower-income enrollees are paying just \$1 per month for health coverage. Middle-income Californians making more than \$76K per year are also receiving major help, with premiums capped at 8.5% of income. **The American Rescue Plan provides \$132 million annually for financial help to Central Valley Covered California enrollees. Without major funding in the Build Back Better bill, over 129,000 Covered California enrollees in the Central Valley will see increases in their premiums on average of \$1,000 per person annually.**ⁱⁱⁱ

Vision and Dental Benefits in Medicare

The lack of dental and vision coverage in Medicare is a decades-old coverage gap. Despite overwhelming evidence that oral health and vision are vital to overall health and quality of life, Medicare enrollees are paying out of pocket for most dental and vision care. Almost 3 million Californians report having Medicare coverage with no dental coverage. **There are over 600,000 Medicare enrollees in the Central Valley, and over one-third of Central Valley residents over the age of 65 report they have not seen a dentist in the past year or never at all. If these benefits are included, the Build Back Better Act can ensure older Central Valley residents can access basic dental and vision care.**^{iv,v}

ⁱ Includes the following counties: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare

ⁱⁱ Share of savings calculated as statewide savings per [Families USA What's at Stake](#) proportional to number of county residents with employee sponsored, individual market, or Medicare coverage per [2019 California Health Interview Survey](#) and [CMS Medicare Enrollment Dashboard](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Covered California June 2021 Active Member Profiles](#)

^{iv} [CMS Medicare Monthly Enrollment Dashboard](#)

^v [2016-2019 California Health Interview Survey](#)