



2024

YEAR IN REVIEW

2024 was a year in flux for both health reform and Health Access. Significant progress was made on lowering health care costs and making care more affordable for millions of Californians. At the same time, we also weathered the departure of our 22-year Executive Director and a national election with major health care implications.

Our work towards a more universal health care system continued to succeed in 2024. Efforts to expand and improve Medi-Cal, while making Covered California more affordable than ever, have led to the state's lowest-ever uninsured rate. While some major health care consumer efforts stalled this year, we pushed closer to key goals that will bring us quality, equitable, and affordable health care for all Californians.

Controlling Health Care Costs Office of Health Care Affordability

- + Major efforts to contain the sky-rocketing cost of care in California came to fruition as the state's Office of Health Care Affordability set a 3% cost growth target for the entire health care industry over the next 5 years.
- + Over time, this means that our health care costs—which have been rising much more rapidly than inflation—will rise no faster than median income growth. Setting this goal is a key victory for consumers in our fight to rein in health care corporate greed and sets California as an example for the nation.
- + Additional work done in regions of the state with especially high costs—like Monterey County—pressured major hospitals in the area to announce their own cost growth reduction measures.



Consolidation

- + This year we set our sights on a growing footprint in our health care system that has many negative implications for consumers: the expanding presence of private equity.



- > Our bill, AB 3129 (Wood) took on these profit-driven companies to ensure Attorney General oversight when they buy a hospital or doctor group, so that consumer impact would be at the forefront of these deals.
- > A version of AB 3129 made it to the Governor's desk, marking the farthest any legislation has come to expanding the powers of the AG over health care mergers in nearly 30 years. Unfortunately, Governor Newsom vetoed the bill, leaving private equity transactions without oversight in the state.

Improving & Expanding Medi-Cal Removing Access Barriers Based on Immigration Status

- + 2024 was the first year that every income-eligible Californian, regardless of immigration status, was able to enroll in Medi-Cal, a huge victory for the campaign towards #Health4All.
- + This action puts our state ahead of all others in efforts to achieve universal health care coverage, ensuring that everyone who calls California home can get the care they need.
- + We also supported local coalitions with advocating for the County of Contra Costa to expand their Basic Health Care Program to include access for undocumented resident with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level.



+ In 2024 the #Health4All campaign focused on the work beyond Medi-Cal to also remove immigration status barriers to Covered California. We rallied at the State Capitol to push for coverage that would include another 50,000 Californians and will continue these efforts in 2025.

Preventing Cuts to In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)

+ Health Access, along with several other health and immigrant rights groups, successfully fought back against unfair proposed cuts to IHSS services for undocumented Californians. Such cuts would have resulted in further impoverishment for community members and increased state spending on expensive nursing home care.

Making Care More Affordable CoveredCA Cost-Sharing Assistance

+ In 2024, Californians benefited from the most affordable Covered California plans ever. This is thanks to the Biden-Harris Administration's enhanced premium subsidies that ensure no Californian is paying more than 8.5% of their income on health coverage. Most are paying much less than that, as little as just \$10 per month.



+ With this premium help, health advocates have been able to secure state investments of \$82 million this year further lower costs for 650,000 Covered California Silver plan enrollees.

- > These low and middle-income Californians have lower co-pays for doctor visits, prescription drugs, labs, and more that are often barrier to care.
- > Deductibles are zeroed out for these enrollees, preventing many who end up getting admitted to a hospital from having to pay as much as \$5,400 out-of-pocket.

+ Starting in 2025, the state affordability assistance will double to \$165 million annually.

+ This affordability help is at risk in 2025 without congressional action to make these federal subsidies permanent.

Increasing Consumer Protections Medical Debt

+ Two bills signed into law this year and supported by Health Access will provide major relief for the one in three Californians dealing with medical debt. These new laws will help make sure people are not punished for seeking much-needed medical help.



> SB 1061 (Limon) will keep medical debt owed to health care providers off credit reports and from negatively affecting credit scores

> AB 2297 (Friedman) improves access to financial assistance for care and prohibits the use of home liens to collect unpaid medical debt from financially eligible patients.

Tobacco Prevention

- + The We Breathe Community Forum, hosted by the CA LGBTQ HHS Network, educated participants about LGBTQ+ tobacco use, and how to prevent, assist, and advocate effectively for 2SLGBTQ+ folk from across the state.
- + OUT Against Big Tobacco held a Tobacco Advocacy Day featuring laughter yoga, an informational panel, HIV testing services, and a Lunch-and-Learn hosted by the Pride Study.

Enhancing Health Equity

SOGI Data Collection

- + The CA LGBTQ HHS Network successfully passed SB 957 (Wiener), which expands **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)** data collection requirements for state health departments.
- + The LBTQ Health Equity Initiative was launched aiming to tackle the lack of SOGI data collection practices within cancer registries, specifically within Southern California’s Cancer Care clinics.



Federal Advocacy

Factsheets & Impact Reports



- + Leading up to the November election, Health Access produced a series of Impact Reports detailing how federal actions affect Californian’s health care. These included data on Medi-Cal, Covered California, and Medicare, and focused on four regions of the state: The Central Valley, Riverside County, Los Angeles County, and Orange County.

> Our team participated in several accountability events in each of these areas at events hosted by Protect Our Care

- + Following the election, we quickly put out a fact sheet detailing the steps that California has taken to shield health consumers from past attempts by President Trump to sabotage our health care.

#Fight4OurHealth

- + Relaunching our work from President Trump’s first term, Health Access reconvened its statewide Fight4OurHealth campaign, which seeks to push back against any efforts to cut, cap, or otherwise take care away from Californians.

> Through this effort we plan further action in 2025 to hold California congressional members accountable for ensuring Californians remain able to access the care they and their families need.

Protecting LGBTQ+ Health

- + The LGBTQ+ HHS Network continued their advocacy for gender-affirming care for Trans youth and Intersex rights, ensuring these priorities remain front and center amid federal threats to LGBTQ+ rights.

We thank Anthony Wright for his 22 years of service to California's health care consumers!

