



Our View: Ensure Access to Health Care in Immigration Reform

Background

Immigration reform, a dormant issue since the defeat of a comprehensive reform proposal in 2006, is back in the national conversation, with new proposals from the president and members of Congress.

But absent from the conversation has been discussion on how immigrants will access essential health care services. Currently, they often turn to hospital emergency departments for basic services, creating an inefficient, unmanaged, and costly model of care.

The Congressional Budget Office projects that 30 million non-elderly individuals will remain uninsured after full implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Undocumented immigrants are projected to constitute 25 percent of that residual uninsured group. Providing health care to undocumented immigrants already occurs—and at significant cost to states, counties, and essential hospitals.

Ensuring Health and Well-Being

As the nation debates changes to immigration laws, access to health care must have a central place in the conversation. Undocumented immigrants, or those in a new transition period, need the same access to health care services as other vulnerable people.

Without support, these populations will continue to have limited access to the care they need. Access to

primary care and preventive services can keep them healthy and productive—and reduce their cost to taxpayers—regardless of their legal status.

Added Pressure on Essential Hospitals

Without clear access to health care services, care to undocumented immigrant populations will continue to be inefficient and costly to the health care system.

Although there is a patchwork of funding sources to support care for excluded immigrant populations, those sources do not cover the full cost of providing care. This places the burden on essential health care providers, such as our members, to provide needed care with limited resources, and it places an added strain on already-limited state and federal budgets.

Our Ask

We urge Congress to include provisions ensuring access to health care in any immigration reform proposals.

We and our members stand ready to work with lawmakers to support health care for all vulnerable people, including immigrant populations. We are open to further dialogue about how that can be achieved.

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