

The Health Equity and Access Under the Law (HEAL) for Immigrant Families Act

What is the HEAL for Immigrant Families Act?

The HEAL for Immigrant Families Act (HEAL Act) is federal legislation that removes the political barriers blocking immigrants from accessing the healthcare they need and deserve. Currently, millions of people are locked out of programs like Medicaid and Medicare because of their immigration status or how long they've been in the United States. These barriers are not rooted in income eligibility. The HEAL for Immigrant Families Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D- WA) and Nanette Barragán (D-CA) and in the U.S. Senate by Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) ([H.R. 4104](#), [S.B. 2149](#)).

Why do immigrants face healthcare insurance coverage obstacles?

In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) — a law that systematically stripped immigrant communities of access to federal health insurance programs, creating the barriers that exist today.^[1]

Since then, immigrants have paid into the system but remain locked out of it:

- Undocumented immigrants contributed \$96.7 billion in taxes in 2022 alone, funding the very programs they are explicitly barred from using.^[2]
- Federal law continues to bar immigrants from Medicaid, CHIP, Medicare, and the ACA Marketplace.^[3]
 - Even lawfully present immigrants often need to wait five years before they can access coverage.^[4]
- As of 2025, almost half (46%) of likely undocumented immigrant adults and one in five (21%) lawfully present immigrant adults reported being uninsured.^[5]
- The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) in 2025 gutted healthcare and food aid for lawful immigrants, including refugees, asylees, and survivors of trafficking and domestic violence. Starting October 1, 2026, only a narrow group will keep Medicaid and CHIP eligibility. Those include green card holders past the five-year wait, certain Cubans/Haitians, COFA migrants, and qualifying children/pregnant people in opt-in states.

What does the HEAL Act do?

The HEAL Act aims to restore and expand health insurance coverage for immigrants of all statuses so that immigrants in the U.S. can participate in healthcare programs. Specifically, the HEAL Act would:

- **Restore Medicaid and CHIP coverage for lawfully present immigrants.** The bill eliminates the discriminatory five-year waiting period, ensuring all lawfully present immigrants, lawful permanent residents or Green Card holders, and including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, can access the coverage they qualify for.
- **Protect Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and future relief holders.** The bill guarantees that DACA recipients and anyone who gains new forms of immigration relief cannot be shut out of federally funded healthcare programs.
- **Remove Medicare barriers for lawful permanent residents.** Lawful permanent residents would no longer be blocked from Medicare simply because of how long they have lived in the United States.
- **Open the ACA Marketplace to undocumented immigrants.** For the first time, undocumented immigrants could purchase health insurance and access financial assistance through the ACA, just like everyone else.
- **Give states the power to go further.** States that want to extend Medicaid and CHIP to undocumented immigrants would finally have the option to do so.

Why does URGE support HEAL?

The HEAL for Immigrant Families Act is a federal legislative solution directly tied to URGE's Young People's Reproductive Justice Policy Agenda, specifically, *Accessing Healthcare and Comprehensive Sex Education*. URGE advocates to ensure health equity for immigrants and guarantee that no one is denied care because of who they are or where they're from. The HEAL Act is also connected to another URGE issue, *Transforming Our Economy so Young People Can Thrive*, which demands that we reform the government support programs that use immigration status as a weapon to deny people the resources they need to live.

Immigrant justice is Reproductive Justice. For all people to make healthy and autonomous decisions about their bodies, families, and communities, they must be able to access important and basic resources like healthcare. The HEAL for Immigrant Families Act would work to ensure that young people who are immigrants and their families have access to care they need to have healthy lives.

To learn more information about the HEAL Act and how you can support the organizations working for immigrant's access to healthcare, please visit the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) website at [NAPAWF - National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum](#) or the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice's website at [National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice | NLIRJ | Salud | Dignidad | Justicia](#)

- [1] Can Undocumented Immigrants Access Health Care? National Immigration Law Center (NILC). December 5, 2025. <https://www.nilc.org/articles/can-undocumented-immigrants-access-health-care/> - [NILC \(nilc.org\)](https://www.nilc.org/)
- [2] Ibid.,
- [3] Ibid.,
- [4] The HEAL for Immigrant Families Act. National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice. Updated February 2026. <https://www.latinainstitute.org/our-work/campaigns/heal/> - [National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice \(latinainstitute.org\)](https://www.latinainstitute.org/)
- [5] Key Facts on Health Coverage of Immigrants. May 2026. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/key-facts-on-health-coverage-of-immigrants/>

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