



*We Will Empower Bold Change to Elevate
Human Flourishing.*

EXPANDING COVERAGE FOR IMMIGRANTS

THE ISSUE

According to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 46.2 million immigrants are residing in our nation. The majority of immigrants work but generally are employed in jobs or industries that offer lower wages and provide limited access to employer sponsored insurance. Due to limited access to employer sponsored coverage and eligibility restrictions for Medicaid and CHIP, non-citizens are three times as likely to be uninsured compared with US-born citizens and are less likely to obtain needed care or preventive services.

CHA believes all persons should have equal access to health care, regardless of immigration status, and therefore supported inclusion of health coverage for both legally resident and non-legally resident immigrants in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Providing health care access also makes sense from a fiscal standpoint—uninsured immigrants, like uninsured citizens, receive care but in the most expensive setting, the hospital emergency room, adding to hospital uncompensated care costs. Including all immigrants in the health care system would save money in the long term by enabling them to receive timely care in a less costly primary care setting. Lawfully present immigrants also are subject to a five-year waiting period for Medicaid. Keeping the five-year bar on Medicaid for legally present immigrants prevents them from accessing a program more affordable than private health coverage.

MINISTRY TRADITION

The United States Catholic Conference, in their 2003 pastoral letter on immigration *Strangers No Longer*, the bishops reaffirmed that regardless of legal status, immigrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity which should be respected. The social doctrine of the Catholic Church teaches that each person is created in the image of God; that each human life is sacred and possesses inalienable worth; and that health care is essential to promoting and protecting the inherent dignity of every individual. The Catholic health ministry, as stated in our *Vision for U.S. Health Care*, further reaffirms our call to pay special attention to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, those most likely to lack access to health care, in our journey towards affordable, accessible health care for all. This commitment is why the ministry has strongly supported health coverage for all immigrants, legal residents and undocumented residents.

CHA'S POSITION AND ACTIVITIES

CHA opposes the current Administration's enforcement-only immigration policies as overly harsh and not conducive to supporting immigrants and their families in being healthy and productive members of our society. Harsh enforcement policies—including the withdrawal of enforcement action guidance for formerly protected areas including health care settings—also have the effect of discouraging immigrants of any status from seeking the services they



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need including health care. Our Catholic health ministry remains committed to expanding access to care for everyone, and opposed to any actions that restrict that access.

Instead, CHA encourages the Administration and Congress to pursue productive and meaningful legislation that protects immigrants and brings them and their families fully into our society, workforce and economy. CHA supports:

- Comprehensive immigration reform legislation such as the *U.S. Citizenship Act* in the previous Congress, to provide an earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented persons in the U.S.; bolster family-based immigration and support asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations with increased protections; and provide measures to address the root causes of migration
- The American *DREAM and Promise Act* (H.R. 1589), to provide protections and a pathway to citizenship for young undocumented immigrants (“Dreamers”) as well as TPS holders
- The Protecting Sensitive Locations Act (H.R. 1061 and S. 455), to restore and codify former guidance in the Department of Homeland Security protecting health care settings and other sensitive locations from immigration enforcement actions
- Elimination of the current bar on access to federal health programs for legal immigrants for the first five years of residence in the U.S.