

CHILDREN AND LEGAL IMMIGRANT INCLUSION IN HEALTH CARE REFORM

Overview

We all value a system where people are treated fairly. Unfortunately, there are millions of people in this country who work hard and pay their fair share of taxes but would be denied access to affordable health care under current proposals. Legal immigrants who qualify for Medicaid services are unfairly denied access to the program for five years even though they pay taxes like everyone else.

Americans value fairness. Our health care system should treat everyone fairly by letting those who want insurance to buy it at a reasonable cost and allowing all those who are poor have access to Medicaid. This must be the end result of health care reform.

This is especially true for our children, who are our most precious resource. Children need regular check-ups to make sure they enter school healthy and ready to learn. Making sure all children and pregnant women have access to coverage will ultimately strengthen our nation.

Poor access to health care leads to bad health, and leads to higher costs for our entire country. Five years is too long to wait for legal immigrant women to receive routine preventive and prenatal care. People who get Swine Flu cannot wait five years. People who are diagnosed with cancer cannot wait five years. We must provide children and adults with access to essential, preventive care that keeps people healthy.

Why make us all pay higher health care premiums by telling immigrants they can't contribute and be part of our health care system? Letting legal immigrants pay into the health care system and have access to health care will help bring down the costs for everyone. It will allow for true access to health care for everyone who needs it and save money for our health care system in the long-run.

Actions

1. The Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2009, H.R. 3090, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives, includes proposals to provide all poor children and pregnant women access to Medicaid. These proposals must be included in health care reform.
2. Policies that restrict access to health care add to overall health care costs for our entire country. If we eliminate the mandated five-year waiting period for the federal Medicaid program, we would allow legal immigrants to access cost-saving preventive care, in many cases eliminating costly emergency room treatment for health problems that have become too severe to ignore.
3. If we are going require everyone to purchase health care, then we must let everyone actually have access to affordable health coverage. Proposals to provide subsidies to ensure that low- and moderate-income individuals and their families can afford health insurance should not include waiting periods for legal immigrants or add unnecessary barriers to purchasing health insurance.