



June 12, 2018

The Honorable Jim Wood
Chair, Assembly Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: ?SB 974 (Lara) Medi-Cal: immigration status: adults
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Chair Wood,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, supports SB 974 (Lara), which would provide comprehensive full-scope Medi-Cal to income-eligible undocumented adults over the age of 65 by removing immigration status as an eligibility exclusion.

Today, California provides near-universal health care coverage for children. In 2015, California removed immigration status as an eligibility barrier for Californian children to access full-scope Medi-Cal. This has ensured that over 200,000 children have enrolled in life-saving, comprehensive health coverage. However, their parents, including grandparents, and other undocumented Californians continue to lack access to health care. This reality has tremendous health and economic impacts on families and our state where 1 in 6 of all California children have at least one undocumented parent, including those over age 65.

Undocumented Californians are deeply rooted in our state and provide significant economic, familial, and cultural contributions to our communities. Despite their vital place in California's social and economic fabric, undocumented and uninsured Californians are denied care because of where they were born. Of the nearly 3 million Californians who remain uninsured, 58% are undocumented adults. Aging undocumented Californians have lived in our state for decades raising families and paying billions in local and state taxes, as well as Medicare and Social Security. 1 Yet, they will never see the fruit of that labor as they retire without safety net access or health care. Californians' well-being counts on routine care, prescriptions for health conditions, and vital follow-up care that reduce the cost of undiagnosed chronic illness and prevent treatable conditions from becoming life threatening emergencies.

SB 974 removes exclusions to routine and comprehensive care for our income eligible undocumented elders as they retire from a lifetime of economic contributions to our state. This critical legislation honors our aging undocumented Californians and their significant contributions by ensuring that they can age with dignity when they reach the age of 65. Including Californians in our health system, including undocumented elders who are our parents, grandparents, neighbors, community members, and colleagues, is essential to a truly inclusive and equitable California.

California pediatricians support universal access to care because a healthier community supports and contributes to the

health of children. First, a child's positive development relies on their having healthy parents and caregivers. Second, covering adults (both parents and other adults, such as uncles and aunts, adult-age siblings) can contribute to the financial stability of the family.² Finally, public health issues are best addressed when all members of a community can access care.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 across the state urge you to vote AYE on SB 974 (Lara). Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Ruiz', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Melissa Ruiz, M.D., Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Executive Board Member, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: Assembly Health Committee Members
Office of Honorable Ricardo Lara, California State Senate (Author)
AAP-CA Leadership; Lobbyist Lydia Bourne

1 <https://www.vox.com/2018/4/13/17229018/undocumented-immigrants-pay-taxes>

2 <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Covering-Parents-v2.pdf>