

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Dr. Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 2191
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 56 (Durazo) Health4All - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Pan,

NextGen California is pleased to support SB 56 (Durazo), which would bring California one step closer to universal coverage by expanding full-scope Medi-Cal to income-eligible seniors ages 65+, regardless of immigration status. NextGen California believes California should strive for a health system that is equitable, affordable, and provides quality care. A meaningful step to achieve this goal is to ensure that everyone who calls California home has access to health insurance, including the undocumented population.

California is home to roughly 2.3 million undocumented immigrants who make up about 6% of the state population.¹ In 2018, undocumented Californians contributed \$3.7 billion in state and local taxes, over \$40 billion in spending power to our economy² and they are overrepresented in jobs deemed “essential” during the pandemic.³ However, this population is excluded from federal stimulus payments, unemployment insurance, and safety net programs for health care and food assistance.

Although the state has set up temporary programs for the uninsured to access COVID-related care they barely scratch the surface of the health crises that plagues our immigrant communities — especially elderly individuals. Thousands of undocumented seniors have gone years without a check-up and may have unknown chronic conditions that need preventive care treatment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made visible as well as exacerbated the magnitude of racial health disparities. These disparities result in deadly outcomes for undocumented Californians who are systematically excluded from our social safety net.

¹ <https://immigrantdataca.org/indicators/immigration-status#/>

² <https://immigrantdataca.org/indicators/economic-contributions#/?immig=3>

³ <https://immigrantdataca.org/indicators/industries-and-occupations#/>

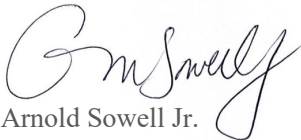
We believe California's health system and Californians in general are healthier and stronger when everyone has affordable, comprehensive health coverage. SB 56 would remove immigration status as an eligibility to Medi-Cal for low-income seniors whose incomes are below 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL). This means that an undocumented adult in a single-person household would be eligible if their income is \$17,609 or less.⁴

California already provides near-universal coverage for children and young adults, having expanded full-scope Medi-Cal to all low-income children up to the age of 18 and young adults up to the age of 25, regardless of immigration status.

SB 56 continues California's leadership in improving on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by expanding comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage to the largest population within California's remaining segment of the uninsured: undocumented adults. SB 56 would start to close the state's largest healthcare coverage gap and move California one step closer to universal coverage.

Immigrants are a critical part of our state's social, cultural and economic fabric, and they should be treated equitably and included in our healthcare system. For these reasons, NextGen California is proud to support SB 56 (Durazo) and urges your "Aye" vote on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Arnold Sowell Jr.

Executive Director, NextGen California

⁴ <https://www.coveredca.com/pdfs/FPL-chart.pdf>