



Impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) on Immigrants' Access to Health Care

Overview

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed on July 4, 2025, makes sweeping changes to federal health programs—Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). These changes dramatically reduce health coverage options for lawfully present immigrants and reinterpret the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in a more restrictive way. Undocumented immigrants are already ineligible for the assistance listed below.

Key Changes Affecting Immigrants

- **Medicare Eligibility Restricted:** Beginning July 2025, only U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (green card holders), certain Cubans and Haitians, and COFA residents will be eligible for new Medicare enrollment. Other lawfully present immigrants, including asylees, refugees, and TPS holders, will lose federal coverage eligibility for new enrollment. Starting January 4, 2027, lawfully present immigrants other than those listed above who are currently enrolled will have access to Medicare stripped away despite paying into the program for at least a decade.
- **Marketplace (ACA) Subsidies Eliminated:** Starting 2026, all lawfully present immigrants with income below 100% of the Federal poverty level will lose access to premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions, though remain eligible for state-funded Cascade Care Savings premium assistance. Approximately 10,000 lawfully present Washingtonians, including asylees, refugees, TPS holders, and others will lose access to federal subsidies for health coverage which are significantly higher than state subsidies. DACA recipients lost eligibility in October 2025. In 2027, lawfully present immigrants other than U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (green card holders), certain Cubans and Haitians, and COFA residents will lose access to premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions. Approximately 15,000 lawfully present Washingtonians, including asylees, refugees, and TPS holders, will lose access to federal subsidies for health coverage.
- **Medicaid Eligibility Restricted:** Beginning October 2026, only U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (green card holders), certain Cubans and Haitians, and COFA residents will remain eligible for Medicaid and CHIP. This means that approximately 30,000 lawfully present immigrants, including asylees, refugees, and TPS holders, will lose federal Medicaid eligibility. Washington has laws requiring state coverage for children and pregnant people regardless of immigration status; however, there is also a significant budget shortfall so these laws may change.
- **Coverage Renewal and Verification Barriers:** New rules require frequent income and immigration verification, eliminate automatic renewals, and reduce special enrollment opportunities, making it harder for low-income families, including immigrant families, to maintain coverage.

Impact on PRWORA Interpretation

OBBBA reinterprets and narrows PRWORA's definitions of who is a "qualified immigrant." It removes agency and state flexibility that had previously allowed broader coverage, codifying immigrant exclusion across all major health programs. This shift aligns the ACA, Medicare, and Medicaid with PRWORA's strictest rules, removing decades of administrative discretion that helped states extend care to lawfully present immigrants.

Consequences

- **Loss of Coverage:** Tens of thousands of immigrants will lose access to federally supported health coverage between 2025–2027.
- **Shifts Costs to States & Hospitals:** OBBBA makes the largest cuts ever to Medicaid. States wishing to maintain coverage must now find ways to fill significant gaps with state dollars.
- **Widening Health Inequities:** Reduced access to preventive and chronic care will deepen disparities in Latino and other immigrant communities.

Bottom Line

The OBBBA marks the most significant rollback of immigrant health access in nearly 30 years. It limits federal support for health care, slashes federal support for Washington's budget by at least \$31 billion over the next decade, and pushes immigrant families into debt, shifting the costs to state programs, hospitals, philanthropy, and community partnerships for essential health services. Cutting the safety net for immigrants hurts families and communities: 1 in 3 kids in Washington has an immigrant parent. Immigrants in Washington work as caregivers, firefighters, and in other essential roles. All Washingtonians will suffer when immigrants are denied care.

