

# ***HEALTH EQUITY & ACCESS UNDER THE LAW (HEAL) FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN & FAMILIES ACT OF 2015***

## **Health fairness in the HEAL for Immigrant Women & Families Act of 2015:**

Immigrants work hard, pay taxes, and contribute to our communities and our economy, yet are often denied access to the health care programs their tax dollars support. Almost two decades ago, politicians began enacting harmful restrictions that put affordable health coverage out of reach for millions of immigrants in the United States. These policy and legal barriers undermine access to life-saving preventive and primary care, threaten the economic security of families and communities, and limit the ability of immigrants to fully contribute to our nation's shared prosperity. These restrictions disproportionately harm women, who are the majority of immigrants. Immigrant women are also particularly likely to be low-income, young, and uninsured—all characteristics linked to a high risk of negative health outcomes.

## **What the HEAL for Immigrant Women & Families Act of 2015 does:**

The Health Equity & Access under the Law (HEAL) for Immigrant Women & Families Act of 2015 restores access to health coverage so immigrants in the United States can participate in the health care programs their tax dollars support. By ensuring all lawfully present immigrants can access affordable coverage, this bill will allow immigrant women and their families to receive the health care they need, creating healthier communities and a stronger economy. The HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act of 2015:

- **Restores full-scope Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to all lawfully present immigrants who are otherwise eligible.** The bill removes the discriminatory legal barriers to health coverage for lawfully present immigrants imposed by the 1996 welfare law. It eliminates the restrictive and outdated list of "qualified" immigrants for Medicaid and CHIP eligibility, and eliminates the five-year waiting period.
- **Removes the unjustifiable exclusion of a subset of individuals granted deferred action from the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid, and CHIP.** The bill would allow *all* deferred action recipients to obtain Medicaid or CHIP coverage if otherwise eligible and to purchase qualified health plans in the Marketplace, obtain premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions, and enroll in the Basic Health Program. In doing so, the bill restores access to public and affordable health coverage for those granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and ensures that those who will gain new forms of administrative relief via a deferred action program (like the expanded DACA program and the new Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, or DAPA program) will not be similarly excluded from the health care programs their tax dollars support.

(CONTINUED)

- **Reinstates Medicaid eligibility for COFA migrants**, or citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau, under the Compacts of Free Association (COFA), who were inadvertently barred from the Medicaid program by the 1996 welfare law.
- **Enables immigrants without lawful status to buy coverage through the health insurance marketplaces using their own money.** Currently, undocumented immigrants are ineligible to purchase marketplace coverage based solely on their immigration status; the bill removes this restriction though does not allow government subsidies for this population.

### **Why you should support the HEAL for Immigrant Women & Families Act of 2015:**

- **This is about fair treatment.** Immigrants work hard, pay taxes, and contribute to our communities and our economy. They should be treated fairly by the health care system to which they contribute.
- **This is important for women and families.** Immigrant women are disproportionately harmed by legal and policy barriers to affordable health coverage and care. Immigrant women are often the decision-makers regarding health care for their families and the backbones of their communities. When mom is healthy, her entire family benefits.
- **We all benefit from healthy communities.** It is in the shared health and economic interests of our country as a whole for immigrants to be able to participate in the health care system their tax dollars support. When more of us have health coverage, our workforce is healthier and our economy is stronger.

### **How to support the HEAL for Immigrant Women & Families Act of 2015:**

- **Senate Offices:** To cosponsor the HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act of 2015, please contact Swarna Vallurupalli at [swarna\\_vallurupalli@hirono.senate.gov](mailto:swarna_vallurupalli@hirono.senate.gov) or 202-224-6361.
- **Organizations:** To endorse the HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act of 2015, please contact Kinsey Hasstedt with the Guttmacher Institute at [khasstedt@guttmacher.org](mailto:khasstedt@guttmacher.org).

###