

# California becomes first state to provide health care coverage to some undocumented adults

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Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation making California the first state to provide health care coverage to young, undocumented adults, a \$98

million measure targeting almost 100,000 people.

The immigrants, ages 19 to 25, are eligible for Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program. The law signed Tuesday was a win for Newsom, who rejected as too expensive a state Senate plan to include adults 65 and older living in the state illegally.

President Trump has called the plan "crazy." Newsom shrugs off the criticism, calling California "the most un-Trump" state in the nation.

Newsom signed the measure the same day the state forecast an average premium increase of less than 1% for 2020 in the state's individual insurance marketplace, the lowest such rate change in the state program's history.

The coverage expansion and the low average premium hike are mostly being funded through restoration of the individual mandate that requires California residents to purchase [health insurance](#) for themselves and their dependants. Californians who fail to purchase insurance would face a state tax penalty.

The plan is similar to a part of President Barack Obama's [health care law](#) that Republicans in Congress eliminated as part of the 2017 overhaul to the tax code.

Not that the state is desperate for cash: California is projected to have a surplus of more than \$20 billion, the largest in 20 years.

"The bold moves by Gov. Newsom and the Legislature will save Californians hundreds of millions of dollars in premiums and provide new financial assistance to middle-income Californians, which will help people get covered and stay covered," said Peter Lee, Covered California's executive director.

Lee said California is "building on the success of the Affordable Care Act" and expanding coverage to hundreds of thousands of people. The California Immigrant Policy Center lauded the inclusion of undocumented young adults but called the plan "bittersweet."

"The exclusion of undocumented elders from the same [health care](#) their U.S. citizen neighbors are eligible for means beloved community members will suffer and die from treatable conditions" said Cynthia Buiza, executive director of the California Immigrant Policy Center.

Newsom has pledged to further expand coverage in the future. The new rules are effective in January and are part of a larger effort to ensure everyone in the state has access to [health](#) insurance.

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