



For Immediate Release

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National Physicians Alliance Raises Concerns over Health Impacts of Current Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act

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The National Physicians Alliance strongly supports bipartisan efforts to reform our immigration system to create a roadmap to citizenship. However, as physicians deeply committed to addressing our country's health disparities, we have serious concerns about the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act in its current form—specifically, concerns about its potential impact on the health of immigrants and their families.

As currently constituted, the bill would require the vast majority of immigrants who are adjusting their status to purchase insurance, but to also wait at least 10 years before they would have any access to the current measures that make health care more affordable. Only those who could pay for insurance at full price could buy it. They would also be ineligible to qualify for Medicaid during that same waiting period. And even DREAMers and farm workers who are prioritized for citizenship would likely wait at least 5—7 years before having access to affordable coverage options.

Millions of people would continue to be subject to the injustices of a health care system that often charges the uninsured substantially more than those with health insurance for even basic health services. They could further be penalized because they are required to purchase insurance even though they are ineligible for any financial assistance. This would mean the continuation of the status quo, a system in which being an immigrant to the US means that preventive care is unattainable and that chronic diseases cause significant morbidity and mortality due to lack of access to simple treatments. Lack of prenatal care too often leads to increased maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality, driving up costs. Current data suggests that immigrants overall use considerably less health care including emergency department care than US citizens, but that they are also more likely to lack access to primary, preventive, and prenatal care. These care barriers include the citizen children of non-citizen immigrants.

As physicians, we see the devastating effects of a system that separates our patients into “haves” and “have-nots.” People who do not have health insurance wait too long for necessary care. They don’t get prenatal care. They skip cancer screenings. They fail to control chronic conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes until complications set in, and they lack resources to address serious symptoms until it is too late. This is a waste of human potential and a moral failing we cannot abide. To allow people to enter our country, work our farms, watch our children, and even care for our sick, yet deny them access to basic health care for themselves and their families is an act of political cynicism no American should countenance. We can and must do better. Every person in America needs access to quality health care and we need to ensure that this is the case or we will be paying the price for years.

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Uniting physicians across medical specialties, the National Physicians Alliance creates research and education programs that promote health and foster active engagement of health care providers with their communities to achieve high quality, affordable health care for all. The NPA offers a professional home to physicians who share a commitment to professional integrity and health justice. www.npalliance.org