

# Local officials focus on possible consequences of ACA repeal

By Anne Ternus-Bellamy From page A1 | February 24, 2017

## Learn more

**What:** Community workshop on the Affordable Care Act and potential federal changes, with keynote speaker Rep. John Garamendi, D-Walnut Grove

**When:** 2:30-5:30 p.m. Sunday, March 12

**Where:** Veterans Memorial Center, 203 E. 14th St., Davis

The possible repeal of the Affordable Care Act is the single greatest threat to the well-being of Yolo County's residents and budget, according Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis.

"The world before the ACA in Yolo County was escalating expenses (and) holes in the budget every year to pay for inferior medical care," Provenza said during the Board of Supervisors meeting earlier this week.

That inferior care amounted to a lot of emergency room visits but not much in the way of preventive and primary care, he noted.

But the implementation of the ACA in 2014 expanded the number of people eligible for Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) to all adults with incomes less than 138 percent of the federal poverty level. Enrollment in the program subsequently surged.

In Yolo County, about 27,000 residents receives Medi-Cal benefits prior to the expansion; after expansion, that number doubled. Currently, more than 59,000 Yolo County residents are receiving Medi-Cal benefits, almost 28 percent of the county's population. They include children, working parents, seniors and others.

## California impact

But under some of the proposals floating around Congress, an ACA repeal or replacement might include converting Medicaid funding from a federal match program to a block grant or per capita funding program.

Such a move would have significant impacts on states like California, which implemented the optional Medicaid expansion, as states would receive a set amount of funding that likely would be far less than what California would have received under the existing match program, according to county officials.

The end result likely would mean many of those who became eligible for Medi-Cal under the ACA would lose their benefits if the state and local governments cannot afford to make up the difference.

And that, Provenza said Tuesday, “is something all of us need to focus on as probably the most important issue coming up that will affect our county.”

Provenza’s comments came during a presentation to the board this week by Robin Affrime, CEO of CommuniCare Health Centers, which serves as a primary source of health care for the county’s low-income population.

The impact of the ACA, Affrime said, has been “very positive.”

“We enrolled thousands into Medi-Cal,” she said, “mostly adults who had never been covered before. These were the people who had been uninsured their whole lives.”

“For our patients, this meant instead of going to emergency rooms and being hospitalized for things that could have been prevented, they had more access to health care,” Affrime said.

“They were able to get medications, X-rays, referrals to specialists, able to see optometrists. ... And they were able to have access to primary care, which is very important in preventing more serious illnesses.

“All of these gains are lost if the ACA is repealed,” she said. “All those who were uninsured and then had Medi-Cal will be uninsured again.”

But the impact goes beyond health, she said.

“A study out of UC Berkeley shows that for Yolo County, the repeal of the ACA without adequate replacement will mean the loss of 700 jobs, mostly in the health-care industry but also for people who improved their health and were able to work again and may not be able to if they do not have access to ongoing health care.”

Supervisor Don Saylor of Davis noted that there would be “significant impacts on individual lives of people as well as the fiscal affairs of local government.”

“We need to do all the advocacy we can do,” he added.

Affrime agreed.

“One of the most difficult aspects, is dealing with the uncertainty,” she said. “We don’t know what the plan is. I did just see an outline of a replacement plan from Congress and it is alarming. It is a huge step back. But what we can do is advocate right now.”

## **Workshop planned**

The public is invited to learn more about the Affordable Care Act and the local impact of possible changes during a community workshop scheduled for Sunday, March 12, from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Center, 203 E. 14th St. in Davis.

Rep. John Garamendi, D-Walnut Grove, will be the keynote speaker and panelists will include Affrime; Dr. Ron Chapman, Yolo County's health officer; Anthony Wright, CEO of Health Access; and Dr. Dan Braunstein, statewide co-chair of Health Care for All.

The workshop was planned by the Gatherings Initiative, a group of local faith and community organizations led by the Davis Phoenix Coalition.

Tickets for the workshop may be reserved at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gatherings-initiative-with-keynote-speaker-congressman-john-garamendi-connecting-communities-for-tickets-32110485326?aff=erelexpmlt>.

To arrange for child care, accessibility assistance or to receive more information, email [davisphoenixco@gmail.com](mailto:davisphoenixco@gmail.com) with Community Gathering in the subject line.

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