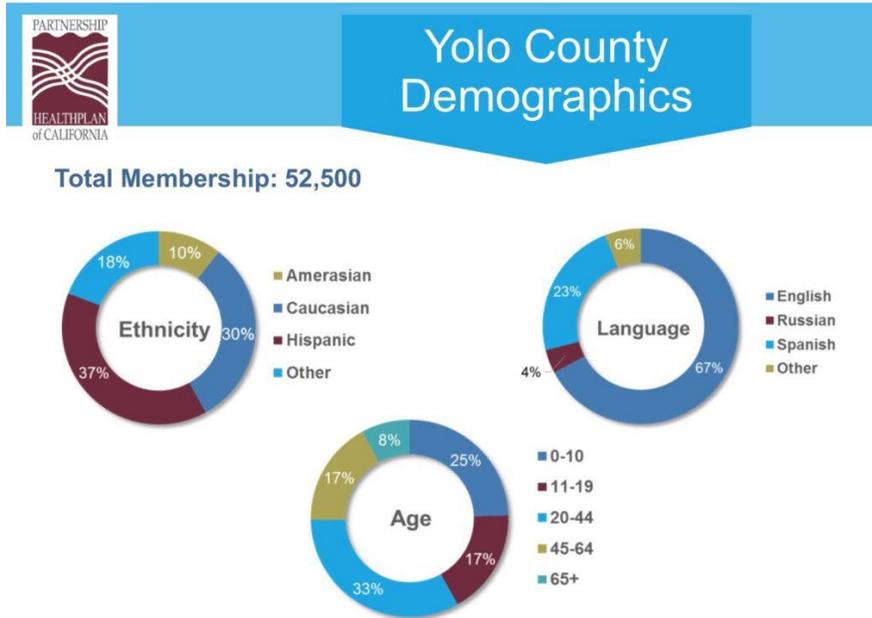


# County supervisors voice concerns over impact of Republican health-care plan

By Anne Ternus-Bellamy From page A4 | May 10, 2017



WOODLAND — Concern remains high among county officials over efforts in Congress to repeal the Affordable Care Act and the impact such a move would have on Yolo County’s Medi-Cal population.

“This is fundamentally one of the most serious threats to our citizens and to the county budget we’ve experienced in a long time,” Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis said Tuesday. “(T)his is going backward.”

Supervisor Don Saylor of Davis echoed Provenza’s comments, noting that “the human cost of this is so extreme.”

Their comments followed a presentation by the chief executive officer of Partnership HealthPlan of California, which is the managed-care provider for the county’s 52,500 Medi-Cal recipients.

Partnership CEO Elizabeth Gibboney noted that Medi-Cal membership in Yolo County nearly doubled from 27,000 in January 2014 to 52,000 in 2017. The increase came after the ACA 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.

About 15,000 Yolo County residents are on the Partnership Medi-Cal plan because of the ACA's Medicaid expansion, Gibboney said.

"These are typically adults, many are working but don't have coverage through their employer," she told county supervisors.

But under the plan passed by the U.S. House of Representatives last week, funding for the expanded Medicaid population would be cut by \$800 billion over the next decade, shifting more costs to states, which would have to come up with the difference or reduce benefits, including by denying coverage to some of those now covered.

California saw its uninsured rate drop by half under the ACA, but Gibboney and others said that would be reversed under the Republican plan, resulting in a return to the days when uninsured individuals delayed care until they were so sick they had to go to the emergency room and local governments ended up footing the bill through indigent health programs.

That, Provenza said, "is the most inefficient system around."

Supervisor Oscar Villegas of West Sacramento noted that since the Medi-Cal expansion was enacted, there has been a 37-percent reduction in ER use by Yolo County's Medi-Cal recipients, which he called "huge."

"We paid for a lot of emergency care," Provenza added. "It was tremendously expensive for us. The expansion benefited Yolo County significantly.

"It seems this is going backward," he added.

A separate issue, Gibboney said, is the impact on the local economy if the ACA is repealed.

A study conducted on behalf of Partnership found 8,500 jobs would be lost in the 14 counties that contract with the managed-care provider.

"The ACA has been not just a good coverage vehicle," she said, "but an economic driver as well."

Given the concerns, Partnership is advocating in Washington, D.C., to "ensure California doesn't sustain significant losses," Gibboney said.

Board members said they will continue to advocate as well, with Saylor saying "the human cost weighs more on all of us than the fiscal cost, but as a county government, we just can't absorb (these costs).

"We're talking about people's lives," he said.

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