

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 6, 2025  
AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 28, 2025  
AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 8, 2025

**SENATE BILL**

**No. 338**

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**Introduced by Senator Becker**  
***(Coauthor: Senator Rubio)***

February 12, 2025

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An act to add Division 118.5 (commencing with Section 150700) to the Health and Safety Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 338, as amended, Becker. Virtual Health Hub for Rural Communities Pilot Program.

Existing law establishes various programs to address the needs of migrant agricultural families. Existing law also provides funding to enhance and maintain rural health services.

This bill would establish the Virtual Health Hub for Rural Communities Pilot Program, and require the State Department of Public Health to administer the program to expand access to health services for farmworkers in rural communities. The bill would require the department to fund grants to a community organization or organizations to administer the program and to provide technical assistance to the organization or organizations for any licensing or reporting requirements necessary to fulfill the program obligations. The bill would require the organization awarded a grant, among other things, to deploy virtual health hubs, as defined, in 2 rural communities based on farmworker population and access to health care. Under the bill, the virtual health hubs would include, at a minimum, computers, Wi-Fi, cubicles for

virtual visits, and exam rooms for telemedicine. The bill would require the department, on or before January 1, 2027, to report the outcomes of the program to the Legislature. The bill would create the Farmworkers Health Equity Fund and would condition implementation of these provisions on no General Fund moneys being used.

The bill would make findings and declarations in support of its provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the  
2 following:

3 (a) It is the intent of the Legislature to model this pilot program  
4 after the successful Farmworker Health Equity Express Bus  
5 program, which launched in 2022, visiting farms in and around  
6 the Half Moon Bay community to expand access to health services  
7 for farm workers.

8 (b) The Health Equity Express Bus was facilitated through a  
9 community partnership between Ayudando Latinos a Soñar  
10 (ALAS) and Life Science Cares Bay Area.

11 (c) The Farmworker Health Equity Express Bus was also made  
12 possible by grant contributions and donations from the Gilead  
13 Foundation, Genentech, and Abbvie.

14 (d) ALAS is a Latino centered nonprofit organization dedicated  
15 to advocating for the farmworker and Latino community.

16 (e) Life Science Cares Bay Area is a nonprofit organization that  
17 finds ways for the local Life Science industry to collectively  
18 address the impact of poverty on its neighbors.

19 (f) The Farmworker Health Equity Express Bus was a shared  
20 vision between ALAS, Life Science Cares, Gilead, and Genentech  
21 to:

22 (1) Support farmworker communities in achieving equitable  
23 outcomes around health care, education, and economic  
24 development.

25 (2) Acquire education that can help other communities replicate  
26 or improve on this program.

27 (3) Augment the reach of existing programs available to the  
28 broader community and enable access to farmworker communities.

1 (g) The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
2 (CDC) indicate that Latino Americans are more likely to have type  
3 2 diabetes versus non-Latino whites. The CDC also reports that  
4 Latinos have poorly controlled high blood pressure compared to  
5 non-Latino whites.

6 (h) The National Institutes of Health report that Latinos are  
7 three times as likely to get COVID-19 and twice as likely to die  
8 of COVID-19 than the general population.

9 (i) A survey by the UC Merced Community and Labor Center  
10 of over 1,200 California farmworkers between 2021 and 2022  
11 produced all of the following key findings from respondents:

12 (1) Forty-nine percent reported being without health insurance.

13 (2) Forty-three percent reported visiting a doctor's clinic in the  
14 last year, and 35 percent had been seen by a dentist.

15 (3) Over one-third reported that their health was "fair" or "poor."

16 (4) Between one-third and one-half reported having at least one  
17 chronic condition, and the most common reported conditions were  
18 diabetes, hypertension, and anxiety.

19 (5) Forty percent of respondents suspected or confirmed being  
20 infected with COVID-19, and of those who tested positive, 40  
21 percent said their health had not returned to normal.

22 (j) A survey from San Mateo County Health shows that common  
23 reasons cited by farmworkers struggling to access health care were  
24 lack of transportation and fear that taking time off from work would  
25 lead to losing their jobs.

26 (k) A survey from the Public Policy Institute of California found  
27 that the cost of care or lack of health insurance were other  
28 commonly cited reasons farmworkers may not seek the health care  
29 they need.

30 (l) Around 25 percent of households with farmworker income  
31 fall below the poverty line.

32 (m) Farmworkers tend to have low levels of formal education  
33 with about 74 percent reporting that they did not complete high  
34 school. The average level of formal education completed by a  
35 California farmworker is the eighth grade.

36 (n) According to the Public Policy Institute of California, about  
37 97 percent of California farmworkers are Latino with 44 percent  
38 reporting that they do not speak or read English at all and 89  
39 percent reporting that Spanish is their primary language.

1 (o) California has over 72,000 students, 3 to 21 years of age,  
2 inclusive, who are eligible to participate in the federal Migrant  
3 Education Program.

4 (p) These students, largely children of farmworkers, have a  
5 four-year graduation rate that is 5 percent lower than the statewide  
6 rate, according to the State Department of Education.

7 (q) Data from the California Assessment of Student Performance  
8 and Progress shows that these students score consistently lower  
9 on state standardized tests. For instance, during the 2022–23 school  
10 year, about 47 percent of all students met or exceeded English or  
11 language arts standards, while only about 24 percent of migrant  
12 students met or exceeded English or language arts standards. Nearly  
13 35 percent met or exceeded math standards, with about 15 percent  
14 of migrant students reaching that threshold.

15 SEC. 2. Division 118.5 (commencing with Section 150700) is  
16 added to the Health and Safety Code, to read:

17  
18 DIVISION 118.5. VIRTUAL HEALTH HUB FOR RURAL  
19 COMMUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM  
20

21 150700. There is the Virtual Health Hub for Rural Communities  
22 Pilot Program.

23 150701. The following definitions shall apply to this division:

24 (a) “Department” means the State Department of Public Health.

25 (b) “Program” means the Virtual Health Hub for Rural  
26 Communities Pilot Program established by this division.

27 (c) “Virtual health hub” means a vehicle or portable facility that  
28 is equipped with, at a minimum, computers, Wi-Fi, cubicles for  
29 virtual visits, and exam rooms for telemedicine.

30 150702. (a) The department shall administer the Farmworkers  
31 Health Equity Fund to expand access to health services for  
32 farmworkers in rural communities by providing virtual connections  
33 to health care providers, mental health services, and educational  
34 services to help improve health outcomes in underserved  
35 communities.

36 (b) The department shall fund grants to a community  
37 organization or organizations to administer the program as  
38 described in Section 150704. The department shall provide  
39 technical assistance to the community organization or organizations

1 with regard to any licensing or reporting requirements necessary  
2 to fulfill the obligations under Section 150705.

3 150703. (a) The Farmworkers Health Equity Fund is hereby  
4 created in the State Treasury.

5 (b) The department shall fund the implementation of this  
6 division with funding other than General Fund moneys, including  
7 gifts, donations, bequests, or grants of funds from private sources  
8 and public agencies, designated for any of the purposes of this  
9 division and deposited in the Farmworkers Health Equity Fund.

10 (c) This division shall be implemented only if no General Fund  
11 moneys are used for this division.

12 150704. (a) An organization in receipt of a grant awarded  
13 ~~pursuant to~~ under Section 150702 shall deploy virtual health hubs  
14 in two rural communities based on farmworker population and  
15 access to health care.

16 (b) The organization shall make space available in or around  
17 virtual health hubs that can be used for visits by professionals,  
18 including, but not limited to, medical teams, educators, and  
19 volunteers, who bring additional programming onsite to rural  
20 farms.

21 150705. On or before January 1, 2027, the department shall  
22 report the outcomes of the program to the Legislature. The report  
23 shall comply with the requirements of Section 9795 of the  
24 Government Code.