

Introduced by Senator Becker

February 12, 2025

An act to add Chapter 3.9 (commencing with Section 18249) to Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 338, as introduced, Becker. Mobile Health 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 Mobile Health for Rural Communities Pilot Program, and require the State Department of Health Care Services to administer the program to expand access to health services for farmworkers in rural communities. The bill would require the department, among other things, to deploy mobile units, as defined, in 2 rural counties based on farmworker population and access to health care. Under the bill, the mobile units 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 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) The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
4 (CDC) indicate that Latino Americans are more likely to have type
5 2 diabetes versus non-Latino whites. The CDC also reports that
6 Latinos have poorly controlled high blood pressure compared to
7 non-Latino whites.

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

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

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

15 (2) Forty-three percent reported visiting a doctor's clinic in the
16 last year, and 39 percent had been seen by a dentist.

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

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

21 (5) Forty percent of respondents suspected or confirmed being
22 infected with COVID-19, and of those who tested positive, 41
23 percent said their health had not returned to normal.

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

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

32 (f) Around 25 percent of households with farmworker income
33 fall below the poverty line.

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

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

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

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

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

SEC. 2. Chapter 3.9 (commencing with Section 18249) is added to Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

CHAPTER 3.9. MOBILE HEALTH FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
PILOT PROGRAM

18249. There is the Mobile Health for Rural Communities Pilot Program.

18249.2. The following definitions shall apply to this chapter:

(a) “Department” means the State Department of Health Care Services.

(b) “Mobile unit” means a vehicle or portable facility that is equipped with, at a minimum, computers, Wi-Fi, cubicles for virtual visits, and exam rooms for telemedicine.

(c) “Program” means the Mobile Health for Rural Communities Pilot Program established by this chapter.

18249.4. The department shall administer the program to expand access to health services for farmworkers in rural communities by providing virtual connections to health care providers, mental health services, and educational services to help improve health outcomes in underserved communities.

1 18249.6. (a) The department shall deploy mobile units in two
2 rural counties based on farmworker population and access to health
3 care.

4 (b) The department shall make space available in or around
5 mobile units that can be used for visits by professionals, including,
6 but not limited to, medical teams, educators, and volunteers, who
7 bring additional programming onsite to rural farms.

8 18249.8. On or before January 1, 2027, the department shall
9 report the outcomes of the program to the Legislature. The report
10 shall comply with the requirements of Section 9795 of the
11 Government Code.