

# H.B. 13: Use federal Emergency Medicaid for COVID-19 testing and treatment

**Immigrants are important members of our community, and they are on the frontlines during this pandemic.** But while they are more likely to work in jobs considered “essential,” they can’t access essential healthcare—like coverage for all COVID-19 testing and treatment. Without this coverage, hospitals and healthcare providers don’t get reimbursed for the costs of care.

Emergency Medicaid for immigrants (“EMSA”) covers emergency healthcare costs for low-income immigrants who do not regularly qualify for Medicaid because of their immigration status. NM’s Human Services Department does not allow EMSA to be used for COVID-19 treatment outside the ER or ICU.

**We all need access to healthcare for our own well-being and that of our community.**

## This bill makes two simple changes to the Medicaid Act:

1. Add testing and treatment for COVID-19 as covered services under EMSA.
2. Simplify the application process so patients can qualify for EMSA *before* their emergency medical conditions arise, not *after*. This makes the payment easier for providers and ensures New Mexicans do not need to apply for Medicaid while they are still sick.

## Without coverage, many New Mexicans will not get tested or treated for COVID-19

- Approximately 43,000 New Mexico residents are uninsured because their immigration status makes them ineligible for Medicaid or a plan on the Exchange.
- Federal programs require a Social Security Number, which deters many families from applying.
- To avoid costs, uninsured families might not seek testing or treatment until they become very sick, increasing the likelihood they will need hospitalization or inadvertently spread the virus to others.
- The national median charge for COVID-19 hospitalization ranges from \$34,662 to \$45,683. These are costs most New Mexico families cannot afford.

## EMSA leverages federal funding for COVID-19 care

12 other states have used Emergency Medicaid to cover **all COVID-19 testing and treatment**, including out of hospital care. These states are CA, CO, CT, DE, IL, MA, ME, MI, NY, OR, PA, and WA.

The NM Human Services Department estimates that all COVID-19 testing and treatment for immigrants who do not qualify for Medicaid would cost roughly \$2.8 million through 2023. Because the federal government pays an average of 73% of Medicaid costs and states have flexibility to determine what conditions and services are covered under EMSA, **New Mexico can leverage federal money for covering COVID-19 testing and treatment.** Dedicating \$2.8 million in state funds to COVID-19 testing and treatment will draw down nearly \$10.2 million in federal funds coming back to our state.

