

ments in the case Nov. 12.

The Trump administration is also trying to expand its “public charge” rule, which would allow immigration officials to more easily deny permanent residency status to those who depend on certain public benefits, such as Medicaid. Federal judges temporarily blocked it from taking effect in mid-October.

But the fears may be misguided, Dar said. Participants of the DACA program already are eligible for Medi-Cal if they meet the income guidelines. And applying for Medi-Cal wouldn’t count against undocumented young adults should they become eligible to apply for permanent residency later because their coverage will be paid for with state, not federal, money, she said.

“We need to get out a clear message that public charge should not be a concern,” Dar said.

Esmeralda, 20, of Santa Maria, works in the fields picking strawberries and attends community college when the fruit isn’t in season. She agreed to be interviewed on the condition that her last name not

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be used.

She needs glasses and has struggled with occasional but debilitating back pain since she was a child in Mexico. The pain sometimes forces her to stop working for the day.

The last time she went to a doctor was almost five years ago, when she started school in the U.S. and had to get vaccinated, she said.

Esmeralda said she would like to sign up for Medi-Cal but will wait to see how the process works for others. She wants to know whether they feel their personal information is being kept safe from federal immigration officials, she said.

“I would wait to make sure there are no problems,” she said in Spanish. “Obviously, with being undocumented, there is fear.” □

## WEEKLY DOSE



### Know your options

It’s open enrollment season, when many people must select or switch their health benefits for the following year. Thankfully, there often are overlooked benefits and programs that can help you save money and boost your well-being at the same time. More health plans are offering telemedicine as an option for care—mobile apps can connect you to a doctor 24 hours a day via the camera on your cellphone, tablet or computer, and can cost as little as \$5 a visit. Some dental plans also offer access to teledentistry, where consumers can avoid in-person costs and order direct-to-consumer products like teeth aligners. Vision plans can provide a second pair of prescription eyewear for a reduced co-pay and cover safety or extended computer-use glasses for free, too. And make sure to check with your employer—they may supply discounted gym memberships or financial incentives for taking part in healthy activities.



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