

Bills signed since last meeting:

How Newsom's Bill-Signing Marathon Affects Your Health Care

Some of the most high-profile — and contentious — measures of the year were health care-related: Who hasn't heard of the bill that spawned [raucous protests](#) at the Capitol by anti-vaccine activists? After [some hesitation](#), Newsom signed SB-276 and an accompanying measure, which will give state public health officials authority to review and, in some cases, revoke questionable medical exemptions for childhood vaccinations.

In a blow to Big Pharma, the Democratic governor also signed what health advocacy groups deem this year's biggest effort to lower prescription drug costs. AB-824 will give the state attorney general more power to go after pharmaceutical companies that engage in "[pay for delay](#)," a practice in which makers of brand-name drugs pay off generic manufacturers to keep the lower-cost generic versions of their medications off the market.

And legislation adopted as part of the state budget this year will require Californians to have health insurance next year or [face a penalty](#). The budget also funded new state-based tax credits for Californians who purchase health insurance through Covered California, including some who earn too much to qualify for federal financial aid.

Also starting next year, young undocumented adults will be [eligible for Medi-Cal](#) if their incomes qualify.

But many lesser-known health care measures could also have a dramatic impact on Californians' lives, including college students, dialysis patients, older adults and new moms. Some of the laws put California in the forefront nationally, such as a measure to expand access to HIV prevention drugs.

Most of these measures take effect Jan. 1:

HIV Prevention

California will be the first state to allow people to access HIV prevention drugs from pharmacies without a doctor's prescription. Pre-exposure prophylaxis ([PrEP](#)) is a once-a-day pill for HIV-negative people that may keep them from becoming infected, and post-exposure prophylaxis ([PEP](#)) is medication that can help prevent the virus from taking hold if they have been exposed to it. [SB-159](#) by state Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) will allow pharmacists to dispense a 60-day supply of PrEP, or a 28-day course of PEP. Patients will need to see a physician to obtain more medication. The bill prohibits insurance companies from requiring patients to obtain prior authorization before obtaining the medication.

Abortion Pill

Students at California's 34 California State University and University of California campuses will have access to medication-induced abortion — commonly known as the abortion pill — at on-campus student health centers by Jan. 1, 2023. Under [SB-24](#) by state Sen. Connie Leyva (D-Chino), students who are up to 10 weeks pregnant will be eligible. Initial costs, such as the purchase of medical equipment, will be paid for with private, not state, dollars.

Maternal Health

Black women are [three to four times](#) more likely to die during childbirth and from other pregnancy-related causes than white women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [SB-464](#) by state Sen. Holly Mitchell (D-Los Angeles) will require perinatal health care providers to undergo bias training with the goal of reducing preventable maternal deaths among black women. “The disproportionate effect of the maternal mortality rate on this community is a public health crisis and a major health equity issue,” Newsom said upon signing the bill.

Some new moms returning to their jobs who want to pump milk at work will face fewer barriers. [SB-142](#) by Wiener will require employers to provide new mothers with a private space that includes a table, chair, electric outlet and nearby access to running water and refrigeration. Businesses with fewer than 50 employees may be eligible for an exemption. “Too many new mothers are unable to express milk at work or are forced to do so in a restroom or other unsuitable space,” Wiener said.

Financial Abuse of Older Adults

Investment advisers and broker-dealers will be required to report suspected financial abuse of elder or dependent adults. [SB-496](#) by state Sen. John Moorlach (R-Costa Mesa) allows these financial experts to temporarily delay requested transactions, such as stock trades and disbursement of funds, when they suspect potential abuse. “With growing Alzheimer’s and dementia concerns, it is critical that we provide safeguards to prevent financial abuse for those in the beginning stages of a difficult life journey,” Moorlach said in a statement.

Smoking in State Parks

Californians will be prohibited from smoking or vaping at state beaches and parks, except for paved roads and parking areas. Violations of [SB-8](#) by state Sen. Steve Glazer (D-Orinda) will carry a fine of up to \$25. Similar efforts were vetoed by former Gov. Jerry Brown.

Nurse Staffing

State health officials who make unannounced inspections of hospitals will start reviewing nurse staffing levels. Some California hospitals disregard the state’s current nurse-to-patient ratio requirements, Leyva, the bill’s author, argued. [SB-227](#) establishes

penalties for violations: \$15,000 for the first offense and \$30,000 for each subsequent violation.

Medical Marijuana on School Grounds

Even though medicinal cannabis has been legal for years in California, it has not been allowed on school grounds. [SB-223](#) by state Sen. Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo), will allow school boards to adopt policies that authorize parents or guardians of students with severe medical and developmental disabilities to administer medicinal [cannabis on campus](#), as long as it is not via smoking or vaping. This allows students to “take their dose at school and then get on with their studies,” Hill said.

Dialysis Industry Profits

One new law could disrupt the [dialysis industry’s business](#) model. Dialysis companies often get higher reimbursements from private insurers than they do from public coverage. One way low-income patients remain on private insurance is by getting financial assistance from the American Kidney Fund, a nonprofit that receives most of its donations from the two largest dialysis companies, Fresenius Medical Care and DaVita Inc. [AB-290](#), by Assemblyman Jim Wood (D-Santa Rosa), will limit the private-insurance reimbursement rate that dialysis companies receive for patients who get assistance from groups such as the American Kidney Fund.

Health Care in Jails And Prisons

County jails and state prisons will be prohibited from charging inmates copays — usually \$3 to \$5 — for medical and dental services with the passage of [AB-45](#), by state Assemblyman Mark Stone (D-Scotts Valley). Some states already prohibit copays in prison, but California is the first to eliminate copays in county jails.

Cancer Patients

Some Californians undergoing cancer treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy will have insurance coverage for fertility preservation treatments. Under [SB-600](#) by state Sen. Anthony Portantino (D-La Cañada Flintridge), private health plans regulated by the state must cover procedures such as the freezing of eggs, sperm or embryos for patients who want to try to have children in the future.

Rape Kits Must Be Tested

SB 22, authored by Chino Senator Connie M. Leyva, states that all rape kits must be submitted to law enforcement agencies and crime labs no later than 20 days after the crime occurs. They must also test rape kits within 120 days after receiving them. A rape kit consists of swabs or samples of DNA taken after a sex assault that is to be tested in the hope of tracking down the attacker. A movement called "[End the Backlog](#)" asserts there is no comprehensive data to estimate just how many rape kits across the country remain untested, languishing years after the crime was initially committed. But the site says experts estimate the numbers are in the hundreds of thousands.