

How California's latest single-payer bill would revolutionize health care

featuring
Assemblymember
Ash Kalra



This time on Code WACK!

Once again, a new single-payer bill, [AB 2200](#) or [CalCare](#), sponsored by the [California Nurses Association](#), has been introduced in the California state legislature. **How will it help save lives? Will it break the bank, or will it save us money? What's different about this version of the bill and what kind of support does it have in the state legislature?**

To find out, we spoke to [Assemblymember Ash Kalra](#). As a longstanding champion of single-payer health care, Assemblymember Kalra introduced statewide legislation known as CalCare ([AB 1400](#) in 2021 and [AB 2200](#) in 2023), which would guarantee comprehensive, high-quality health care for all Californians as a human right.

This is the first episode in a two-part series.

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WE DISCUSS

It's no secret that Californians continue to struggle with accessing and paying for healthcare. Talk to us about your new bill, the California Guaranteed Health Care for All Act, AB 2200. What would it do and how would it help?

"It would set up CalCare ... a single-payer healthcare program in California. It would not be a takeover of the healthcare system. The same doctors that provide private and public health care would continue to do so.

"It's just the payment would be coming from one source, a single source, CalCare, and by doing that, it will allow us to dramatically cut down on costs. You wouldn't have this multi-payer system where you have massive profit-taking from insurance companies and insurance companies telling health care providers like doctors and nurses what they're allowed to do in their treatment.

"It also would allow us to dramatically cut down on administrative costs as well as bargain for reduced costs in pharmaceuticals. By doing all that, not only do we dramatically reduce the cost of health care, we actually allow for the ability to expand the services that would be available to Californians." - **Assemblyman Ash Kalra**

That's great and exactly why HEAL California and California OneCare support the bill! What are some of the services that would be expanded?

"Dental, vision, long-term care, which is really a cliff that we're on the verge of going over right now. It's already in crisis mode. And you would also allow

for services that wouldn't have copays or premium pharmaceuticals where you would not have to pay enormous out-of-pocket costs as well.

" And so everything that would be deemed necessary for ... preventative, urgent and critical care would be covered, *including long-term care, including dental, vision, hearing, which currently Medicare doesn't cover.*

"So you're talking about an expansion of services at a reduced cost to the system as a whole while making sure doctors, nurses, those providing the care, are compensated fairly, in a way that allows them to sustain the practice as well." - **Assemblyman Ash Kalra**

What do you see as the biggest obstacle to getting the bill passed?

"Well, I think there's a lot of misunderstandings about the bill. We still have to continue to educate our colleagues and the community about it.

"Part of what always gets brought up is, 'well, it costs a lot of money.' And folks say that, especially those that you know, don't want to see, like a bill like this move forward will say that ... while never talking about how much our current system is currently costing us.

"Our current system is costing as much as half a trillion dollars a year in California. And so when they say, '*oh, CalCare or single payer costs \$400 billion*' they talk about it in a vacuum as if there isn't a current system that is ... right now bankrupting people ...

"The cost of our current system in *suffering*, the cost in *how much it's taking out of our GDP* ... is enormous. And so we have to get past that aspect of the cost." - **Assemblyman Ash Kalra**

Helpful Links

[CalCare](#)

[AB-1400 Guaranteed Health Care for All \(2021-2022\)](#)

[AB-2200 Guaranteed Health Care for All \(2023-2024\)](#)

[Study: More Than 335,000 Lives Could Have Been Saved During Pandemic if U.S. Had Universal Health Care, Yale School](#)

[How California is trying to establish a single-payer healthcare system,](#)
Healthcare Brew

[Community Voices: Priorities and Preferences of Californians with Low Incomes for Health Care Reform,](#) Healthy California for All Commission

Episode Transcript

Read the [episode transcript](#).

Guest Biography -

Assemblymember Ash Kalra

Assemblymember Kalra represents **California's 25th Assembly District**, which encompasses the majority of San José, including downtown and open space areas in southeast Santa Clara County. He was first elected in 2016, becoming the first Indian American to serve in the California Legislature in state history, and was re-elected to his fourth term in 2022.

Assemblymember Kalra is the Chair of the Committee on Judiciary and also serves as a member on the Housing & Community Development, Local Government, and Natural Resources committees. He is Chair Emeritus of the California Legislative Progressive Caucus and works to ensure that key legislative priorities are successfully passed on civil rights, criminal justice, economic and worker justice, environmental justice, and housing justice.

Assemblymember Kalra has dedicated his tenure in public service to equity and social justice issues. To confront racism and systemic bias in our systems of justice, he authored the historic California Racial Justice Act of 2020 (AB 2542), a landmark bill addressing racial discrimination in criminal sentencing and convictions and a follow up bill in 2022 (AB 256) to apply the Act retroactively for persons with past convictions.

A longstanding champion of single-payer health care, Assemblymember Kalra introduced AB 1400 in 2021 and AB 2200 in 2023 – known as CalCare – which would guarantee comprehensive, high-quality health care for all Californians as a human right.

Assemblymember Ash Kalra was born in Toronto, Canada, and moved to California as a young child, residing in the same South San José neighborhood where he grew up. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a law degree from Georgetown University.

He is currently serving his fourth term in the state Assembly. Previously he served on the San José City Council for eight years and before that he was a Deputy Public Defender for Santa Clara County for 11 years.

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