

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Week of January 13, 2025

State Issues

Special Session:
Wildfire Recovery

Much of the conversations in the Capitol have naturally focused on wildfire relief. While Legislators and staff are still working on preparing their bill packages for the year, the official work of the Legislature has been put on pause. No Committee hearings on the budget have been set, and the hearing for the “Trump Resistance” special session bills has been cancelled. During this time though, the Administration has been active.

Special Session. First, Governor Newsom amended the order for the Special legislative session to include wildfire relief. You can find his order [here](#). Now, the special session that was created back in November to prepare California for the Trump Administration, will now be the vehicle for both budget items and policy bills related to help respond to wildfire recovery in Los Angeles. The Governor has proposed \$2.5 billion to “jump start” the recovery efforts. The funding will support recovery and cleanup, additional wildfire preparedness, and reopening schools shuttered by the fires. The health policy committees have begun exploring what new legislation they may need to work on during the special session that focuses on reducing barriers to health care in the impacted areas.

State policies reinforced and/or waived, as needed. Furthermore, the Governor is directing Boards and State Departments to work on immediate ways that they can support the relief effort that is within their power. To that end, the Department of Managed Health Care, which oversees the health plans, issued an [All Plan Letter](#) directing health plans to ensure policy holders in the effective area can continue to access all necessary services and prescriptions.

DMHC Director Mary Watanabe notes that health plans licensed by the DMHC must help their members impacted by the wildfires with getting appropriate health care services. She provided examples, including “speeding up approvals for care, replacing lost prescriptions and ID cards, refilling prescriptions sooner, or quickly arranging health care at other facilities if a hospital or doctor’s office is not available due to the fires.” These rules apply to both commercial coverage and Medi-Cal Managed Care plans. In addition, they have issued a new DMHC Resource Guide for the 2025 Wild Fires, found [here](#), to help guide those with insurance to understand their rights as policy holders and to provide contact information for the plans.

Finally, the Board of Pharmacy has issued some rule waivers, found [here](#), to allow for remote processing of medications, loosen rules around the delivery of medications, and providing flexibility for certain pharmacy staffing requirements.

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