What Is HR1?

HR1 is a new federal law that changes who can get health coverage (Medi-Cal) and food benefits (CalFresh), and how people stay enrolled. These changes will affect many Sonoma County residents beginning in mid-2026.

While the law reduces federal spending, it shifts costs and responsibilities to counties—who are legally required to provide certain safety-net services when people lose coverage.

Why Does This Matter for Sonoma County?

Many of our neighbors rely on Medi-Cal and CalFresh to stay healthy and to put food on the table. HR1 makes it harder to stay enrolled and limits who qualifies.

When people lose federal benefits, this increases demand on local clinics, food banks, nonprofit safety net organizations, and county services.

How Many People Could Lose Coverage?

Current Medi-Cal participants in Sonoma County: **about 132,000 people**

Due to HR1, an estimated:

- **30,000 are subject to the new work requirements, and of these, it is estimated that 8,700 people** could lose coverage because of new work requirements
- **43,000 individuals are subject to 6-month renewals for Medi-Cal, and of these, it is estimated that 12,000 people** could lose coverage due to more frequent paperwork requirements
- **4,400 people** may lose Medi-Cal coverage because of changes affecting non-citizens

Losing coverage doesn't make medical needs disappear, it just shifts them to local providers and emergency rooms.

What Happens When People Lose Medi-Cal?

Residents who no longer qualify for Medi-Cal may move into:

1. CMSP (County Medical Services Program)

A safety-net health program for low-income adults in counties without county hospitals (like Sonoma County).

CMSP expects **up to 11,560** newly eligible people from Sonoma County.
The more people who shift here, the more costs the county must absorb. The State used to fund a large portion of CMSP, but following the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and the reduced need for CMSP, the State has reallocated those funds to other programs. Unless the State assigns new funding support to CMSP this year, counties will have to absorb this increase.

2. "Medically Indigent" Care

Counties are responsible for providing "last resort" medical support for indigent persons. If someone falls into this category but doesn't qualify for CMSP, the county **must** pay for urgent, life-saving care.
Local community health centers expect **around 15,000 additional patients** needing support.

The projected cost to help clinics serve these patients is **$12.8 million for the first year** and **$39.6 million over three years**.

Food Assistance Impacts (CalFresh)

HR1 also tightens food benefit rules. There are approximately 42,700 Sonoma County residents enrolled in CalFresh. Estimated impacts:

- **Over 15,000 individuals are subject to work requirements, and of these, an estimated 3,900 people** could lose benefits
- **762 non-citizens** may lose eligibility

This means our community could lose **$17 million per year** in CalFresh food dollars, increasing pressure on food banks and nonprofits.

More Work for the County

HR1 requires more frequent paperwork and verification, but **only county employees** can process Medi-Cal and CalFresh eligibility.

To prevent people from losing benefits simply due to paperwork delays, Sonoma County will likely need to hire:

- **38 eligibility workers**
- **7 job-support staff**
- **4 General Assistance staff – adding these GA staff is more for getting cash aid to the lowest income individuals in our community – they aren't really doing CalFresh and Medi-Cal eligibility.**

This is essential to keep eligible residents enrolled.

What Is the County Doing to Prepare?

County staff are planning a three-year response focused on:

1. Keeping People Enrolled

The cheapest and most effective solution: help people stay covered so they don't fall into county-funded health care and can maintain access to food support.

2. Supporting Community Health Clinics

Funding clinics ensures people can access basic care even without insurance.

3. Strengthening the Food System

The County is assessing what food banks and nonprofits need to meet a rising demand.

4. Adjusting County Programs

The County may increase support for General Assistance (GA), the last-resort cash aid program for people with no income.

What's Still Unknown?

We're waiting for key information from the State of California, including:

- Whether the state will provide funding relief for CMSP as well as funding to support the increased eligibility processing workload
- Final CMSP cost estimates
- Updated federal guidance
- How many residents will ultimately be affected

These details will shape the County's budget decisions in June and throughout the year.

Bottom line

HR1 will create real challenges for many families, especially those relying on healthcare coverage and food assistance. Sonoma County is working to protect services, strengthen safety-net programs, and keep residents informed as changes roll out.