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## **Budget Cuts To Eliminate Medical Care**

### ***State Says Cutting Non-U.S. Citizens Could Save \$30 Million***

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**HONOLULU** -- Gov. Linda Lingle is asking the state's Department of Human Services to cut \$42 million from its budget over the next two years.

The state plans to scale back medical coverage for non-U.S. citizens living in Hawaii at a savings of \$30 million.

Under a federal agreement, immigrants from Micronesia, Palau and the Marshall Islands receive full medical coverage with the state footing 100 percent of the bill.

Starting Sept. 1, the state will halt those payments.

Under Basic Health Hawaii, 7,500 non-U.S. citizens, excluding pregnant women and children, will see their coverage drastically reduced.

However, the state plans to use some of the money saved to expand prescription drug benefits for low-income U.S. citizens enrolled in basic medical assistance.

"Having a few people getting great benefits may not be ideal compared to giving more people the basic level of health care they need to stay healthy. So, we are trying to re-shift a little bit," DHS administrator Kenneth Fink said.

The new medical assistance program also gives immigrants living in the U.S. legally for less than five years medical coverage an opportunity currently not available.

It includes 12 outpatient visits a year, 10 inpatient days, six mental health visits, emergency medical and dental care.

"To be quite honest, it's paper thin health care coverage," Rep. John Mizuno said.

At a briefing on Monday, Mizuno expressed concern over the plan not covering two serious medical conditions.

"They flat out said they will not cover dialysis or chemotherapy treatment. What happened to them?" Mizuno asked DHS officials.

The state said it plans to reach out to hospitals and the community to defer costs of treatments for those who can't afford it.

Several health and human service groups attended the meeting to hear if their programs would get the axe.

"When you cut too far and go too deep, the recovery and the human cost that our society will feel is going to be felt for many, many years to come," Protecting Hawaii's Ohana, Children, Underserved, Elderly and Disabled (PHOCUSED) CEO Alex Santiago said.

A lot of programs are concerned because the state still needs to come up with \$12 million and state officials said they are still looking for areas to cut.

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