RFK Jr. announces new health center funding in California swing

The administration says it's the largest expansion of the clinic program since 2019.

By: Rachel Bluth | 08/13/2026 04:59 PM EDT

ATWATER, California — Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced $102 million in new funding for community health centers on Thursday, as primary care facilities across the country brace for the impact of federal health care cuts hitting next year.

The funding amounts to just a fraction of the federal support community health centers receive each year In 2025, the federal government distributed around $5 billion in grants to more than 1,300 community health centers.

"In the constellation of the federal budget, $100 million is not a lot of money," Kennedy said. "It is a lot of money for the federally qualified healthcare centers because they have been operating on shoestrings."

At Castle Family Health Center in rural Merced County, Kennedy said the new funding for community health centers is earmarked for 158 new and existing health centers to establish 415 new sites. The administration anticipates the funding will support 1 million people around the country. Castle is one of 27 organizations in California getting the "New Access Point Grants." That $17 million infusion makes California the largest recipient of funding, even as the state clashes with the Trump Administration over Medicaid funding.

"These health centers are what the American health system should look like, and the template for what we should be doing everywhere," Kennedy said. "Forget about Obamacare. Forget about everything that we're doing to just making the system worse, these make it better."

Nationally, community health centers like the one in Atwater serve around 32 million people, most of whom are on government-sponsored insurance like Medicaid or are uninsured. According to the Common Wealth Fund, 5.6 million community health center patients could lose their Medicaid coverage because of work requirements being implemented next year under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act."

"There's talk about cuts to Medicaid, which I hear a lot about in California. But there were no cuts to Medicaid," Kennedy said.

Overall, including the effects of the new work requirements, the bill will cut more than $1 trillion in health spending over the next decade, with the majority coming from Medicaid. In California, the state expects at least 1.5 million people to lose their Medicaid eligibility because of work requirements, with some estimates putting the losses at over 2 million people. That will mean less money flowing to safety net clinics and hospitals that serve newly uninsured patients.

Kennedy has been touring California this week, touting his “treatment first” approach to homelessness and addiction treatment.