
OPINIONS

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MERCED SUN-STAR

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Good use of block grant

Two loans totaling \$50,000 are bound to make things easier for low-income patients who have dental problems but can't afford to get them corrected.

The city of Merced has agreed to use community block grant funds to upgrade the Childs Avenue Clinic, a dental-medical facility which is operated by non-profit Merced Family Health Centers.

One \$25,000 loan is on a short-term basis of six months and the other for 20 years, both to be used for renovation of the dental clinic at 727 W. Childs Ave. Family Health Centers is obligated to pay back the grants which are interest-free.

At present, the clinic's single dentist serves 2,000 patients a year. By almost tripling the clinic and adding two more dentists, service will become available to 4,000 more patients.

Officials say many residents are suffering from a lack of dental access even though there are ways to pay the bills, including discounts through federal grants, personal health insurance or state-funded insurance.

It's essential the clinic be able to provide service for more people. That's the purpose of the block grants and it obvious the program has been utilized properly to fill a genuine need.