



Consumer, Immigrant, Employer & Health Plan Groups Call for Coverage4All in Final FY23 State Budget

Broad coalition urges policymakers include state-funded EP for low-income immigrants

New York (March 24, 2022) — As state leaders work to finalize the FY23 State Budget, organizations representing consumers, immigrants, employers and health plans are calling for inclusion of the “Coverage for All” legislation (A880A/S1572A) that would establish a state-funded Essential Plan (EP) for all New Yorkers up to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) who are excluded from coverage due to immigration status. During a virtual press conference, organizations, including representatives from the Coverage4All Coalition, Health Care for All, the Business Council of New York State, the New York State Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans, and New York Health Plan Association, outlined their support for expansion of health insurance coverage for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status.

“New York can step up and do the right thing,” said **Elisabeth Benjamin, Vice President, Health Initiatives, Community Service Society of NY**. “As 8 of 10 New Yorkers agree, health care should be accessible to everyone, regardless of immigration status. And the price is right – we can cover our neighbors for only \$345 million, a small fraction of New York’s health care budget.”

“No New Yorker should be denied health care because of immigration status,” said **Assembly Health Committee Chair and bill sponsor Richard Gottfried**. “New York should be a progressive leader in promoting health equity, and expanding health coverage to undocumented adults is good fiscal and moral policy. It’s great news that both the Assembly and Senate have included ‘Coverage for All’ bill in our one-House budget proposals. I thank Speaker Heastie and our Senate colleagues for their support and look forward to working with Governor Hochul to get this done.”

“Our current healthcare system excludes many hard-working immigrant New Yorkers from being eligible for our State’s Essential Plan due to their immigration status,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chairman of the Senate Health Committee and the bill’s Senate sponsor**. “We have the momentum on our side and I look forward to working with Governor Hochul to include this bill in this year’s budget to ensure our communities are provided the healthcare coverage they desperately need.”

“The business argument for Coverage4All is clear. By allowing undocumented immigrants access to the Essential Plan, we are moving that important population from expensive emergency care to more affordable primary care. The proposal gives every New Yorker access to health coverage, helps our neighbors and makes New York healthier – all in a fiscally responsible way. We strongly support and

urge passage of Coverage4All in the Budget,” said **Lev Ginsburg, Counsel to the New York State Business Council**.

A January 2022 report by Community Service Society and the Citizens Budget Commission examined the creation a state-funded Essential Plan for all adults aged 19 and up who earn below 200% of the federal poverty level, regardless of immigration status. According to the report, nearly 426,000 residents in New York State are currently ineligible for public health care programs due to immigration status, including about 154,000 undocumented adults who live below 200% of the federal poverty line. The analysis estimated that expanding coverage to these individuals would result in 46,000 newly insured immigrants with an annual net State cost would be \$345 million, that could leverage existing State Emergency Medicaid spending on this population coupled with additional HCRA revenues and a reduction of \$19 million in annual uncompensated care costs to hospitals.

"Over the past few months, we have brought together a diverse group of advocates, business leaders, everyday New Yorkers, and elected officials to secure healthcare justice for our immigrant communities," said **Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition**. "We joined together because we all believe it is long past time that we extend health coverage to low-income New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status. Now, it is time for Governor Kathy Hochul and the state legislature to finish the work we started and include Coverage for All in the state budget. This goes beyond healthcare justice; it is a critical first step in New York State's road to recovery."

““The New York Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans have been leaders in supporting universal coverage for all New Yorkers. With New York dramatically reducing its uninsured rate over the last several years, the state is on the precipice of universal coverage. But we need to expand health coverage to the undocumented community to achieve that goal. We urge the Governor and Legislature to include the Coverage for All legislation in the final State Budget,” said **Leanne Politi, Executive Director, the New York State Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans**.

Last week, New York City Comptroller Brad Lander released an analysis of the economic benefits of the Coverage for All proposal for individuals, families, employers, and health care providers. According to the analysis, a state-funded EP for all adults aged 19 and up who earn below 200% FPL regardless of immigration status, would provide \$710 million in total estimated benefits annually, including \$649 million from preventing premature deaths, \$22 million in increased labor productivity, \$20 million in lower out-of-pocket costs, and \$19 million in reduced uncompensated care costs.

Throughout the pandemic, immigrant New Yorkers have worked in essential industries, risking their health to be able to provide for their loved ones and keep communities running. Meanwhile many have continuously been excluded from access to health care coverage due to their immigration status. A 2021 [Families USA](#) report revealed that more than 8,200 New Yorkers died from COVID-19 due to a lack of health coverage, including an estimated 2,700 individuals who were undocumented. Adoption of the Coverage for All proposal would increase health care access for undocumented New Yorkers and serve as a critical step towards a healthier New York.

Olga Vazquez, member of Make the Road New York and Westchester resident, shared: “Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers like me are barred from accessing health insurance due to our immigration status, and are suffering and sacrificing our health. In January, I had an accident where I fell and broke my ankle. Unable to access health insurance, I was not able to receive the essential

care, medications, and physical therapy I needed because of the high costs. As a result, I had to delay therapy and was unable to return to work as a babysitter. I urge Governor Hochul and the state legislature to include Coverage for All in the final state budget. Healthcare is a human right and we must ensure health care access for all immigrants in the state.”

“New York has made remarkable progress in expanding coverage to millions of residents, reducing the uninsured rate to less than 5%. Making coverage available to these individuals would be an important step in furthering the goal of universal coverage and should be a top priority for the Governor and legislative leaders to include in the final FY23 state budget,” said **Eric Linzer, President & CEO of the NY Health Plan Association.**

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