



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Immigrant Advocates, Elected Officials Demand Gov. Hochul Include Health Coverage for All in Final Budget

MICHAEL GIANARIS March 30, 2022

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**Albany, NY** – Today, the New York Immigration Coalition, alongside elected officials and impacted individuals, rallied the State Capitol in Albany to demand the inclusion of the [Coverage for All](#) bill in the final state budget.

Uninsured immigrants who would be eligible for health coverage under the legislation shared their struggles to access medical care before and during the pandemic. Following the presser, ralliers held a vigil for the 154,000 immigrants who are currently ineligible for health insurance and demanded that Gov. Hochul and State Legislators keep the bill in the budget

as they deliberate before the April 1 deadline. A recent report by Community Service Society (CSS) found that **eight out of 10 New Yorkers firmly believe that access to quality healthcare shouldn't depend on immigration status.** Additionally, the New York City Comptroller recently announced that if passed, **Coverage for All could potentially provide the state \$710 million in estimated economic benefits annually.**

Today's rally comes days before state lawmakers must finalize the FY2023 budget and follows weeks of events in February and March by immigrant communities in New York City, Long Island, Central New York, Buffalo, Westchester and Albany.

In February, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) launched an **ad campaign** across TV and digital platforms in response to Gov. Hochul leaving out healthcare for immigrant New Yorkers from her executive budget proposal. The Coverage for All coalition, New York Health Plan Association (NYHPA), NYS Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans also unveiled **billboards** near the State Capitol and in Westchester reminding state lawmakers that over 150,000 low-income New Yorkers are currently barred from health insurance due to their legal status.

"All New Yorkers must have access to affordable health insurance regardless of their immigration status. Our lawmakers have already included this essential bill in their one-house budget proposals and it is up to Gov. Hochul to get us to the finish line. Today's demonstration shows how essential it is that all New Yorkers and their families have the opportunity to stay healthy, strong and safe. The Governor, Senate and Assembly can end this cruel disparity in healthcare access by including the Coverage for All bill in the final budget in just a few days," **said Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition.**

"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. The Assembly and Senate have included the '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 healthcare system is excluding thousands of essential workers from being eligible to receive proper healthcare coverage because of their immigration status," said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chairman of the Senate Health Committee and the bill's Senate sponsor**. "As we approach the final days of budget negotiations, I urge Governor Hochul to include my Coverage For All bill in this year's budget so that we are able to expand our Essential Plan to medically cover this key group of New Yorkers."

"Coverage for All makes sense any way you look at it," said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. "It would provide crucial health care for deserving neighbors in need while saving the healthcare system untold resources by ensuring medical ailments are intercepted by early intervention rather than in more costly emergency rooms."

"As we enter the third year of the pandemic, there has never been a more urgent time to pass legislation that prioritizes health justice and equity," said **Senator Alessandra Biaggi**. "New York's immigrant and undocumented communities continue to bear the brunt of our broken healthcare system. Thousands of families have been left uninsured and unable to afford the care they need. New York must lead the way in health justice by including Coverage for All in the State Budget, and guaranteeing every New Yorker, regardless of immigration status, access to comprehensive, quality healthcare."

"Immigrant New Yorkers play a crucial role in allowing our communities to thrive, said **Senator Samra Brouk**. "These essential workers helped keep communities across New York safe during the pandemic, often putting themselves and their families at risk. In a state that depends on the diversity that other cultures bring, we must ensure that we are creating an environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of New Americans. As the daughter of an immigrant, I call on my colleagues in the legislature to support Coverage4All to allow all New Yorkers to obtain insurance coverage, regardless of immigration status. We must treat all people who call New York home with the respect and the dignity they deserve."

"Health Care Is A Human Right! Plain and simple," said **Senator Cordell Cleare**. "I am a proud and vocal supporter and co-sponsor of Senator Rivera's Coverage For All Bill—because it is wise, humane and effective policy. I believe that it fundamentally belongs in the budget and should move forward without delay!"

"Ensuring immigrant New Yorkers have access to health insurance just makes good socioeconomic sense. Having access to quality, affordable health care means every New

Yorker is able to be a better family member, friend, colleague, and community member to all. I'm proud to support Coverage for All, and I look forward to seeing its inclusion in the final budget," said **Senator Andrew Gounardes**.

"Healthcare is a right, and coming out of a global pandemic, we've seen how important it is for everyone across our state to be adequately insured," said **Senator Michelle Hinchey**. "New York should be a leader in building health equity across all communities, and I'm proud to support Coverage for All, which would ensure that every New Yorker, regardless of their immigration status, has access to affordable healthcare. For too long, many of our neighbors have been left in the shadows. Now is the time to change that and bring forward solutions that will ensure people have access to the services they deserve."

**Senator Jackson** said, "Access to healthcare matters; it is a human right. Access to affordable, high-quality care is a right that ALL New Yorkers deserve. The pandemic spotlighted the urgent need for accessible, comprehensive healthcare. Yet there are too many New Yorkers uninsured and excluded due to their immigration status, which is unacceptable. Expanding eligibility for the essential plan to individuals who currently face barriers to health care coverage due to their immigration status is the right thing to do. I am dedicated to doing everything to support policy that guarantees comprehensive healthcare for ALL New Yorkers, no matter their immigration status. That's why I'm a proud co-sponsor of this bill. Let's get the Coverage for All bill in the final budget!"

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been a dramatic reminder of just how imperative it is to ensure that everyone has a right to comprehensive healthcare," said **Senator Brian Kavanagh**. "Extending health coverage is one of the most impactful things we can do to keep all New Yorkers safe and healthy. When more people are covered, they are healthier and our healthcare system as a whole is more efficient and effective. I am proud to support the Coverage for All bill and the necessary funding proposed in the Senate and Assembly budget resolutions. I applaud Senator Rivera, Assemblymember Gottfried, and all the advocates, labor leaders, and community organizations who support this legislation, for their compassionate and determined efforts to win universal, guaranteed healthcare coverage for all New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status."

"There's no more compelling reason to pass Coverage for All than the Covid-19 pandemic that wreaked havoc on New York's immigrant communities," said **Senator John C. Liu**. "Access to quality healthcare should be afforded to all New Yorkers, and by committing to

Coverage for All in the state budget, we look to help heal our immigrant communities, many of whom were the front line service workers we all depended on throughout the pandemic.”

"The pandemic has shown us that public health depends on everyone having access to affordable, quality care," said **Senator Zellnor Myrie**. "Our fates are literally tied together, regardless of our documentation or immigration status. Coverage For All is a moral, economic and health imperative."

"Many recipients of the Excluded Workers Fund used the relief money to get themselves out of medical debt, demonstrating how deeply interconnected the gaps in our system are also applauded for their essential work - let's use this budget to deliver more than gestures of appreciation," said **Senator Jessica Ramos**. "Let's ensure that the value system that understands health care as a human right is solidified by Coverage for All's place in the final budget."

"Immigrants built this country. We are a nation of immigrants," said **Senator James Sanders Jr.** "The undocumented deserve healthcare so they can continue to work and thrive in many of the essential jobs that help are city and state function. Under those conditions, I support that the Coverage for All bill be included in the final state budget."

"Access to affordable health care can be a matter of life and death for many within our immigrant communities," said **Senator Toby Ann Stavisky**, "The Coverage for All bill will provide essential coverage for thousands of deserving New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status. New Yorkers should not have to weigh the health of themselves and their family against the threat of financial ruin."

"Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right," said **Assemblymember Khaleel Anderson**. "For roughly 154,000 low-income and immigrant New Yorkers, many of whom have little to no health insurance options, Coverage For All would ensure more equitable healthcare for them and their families. New York must do right by our working-class immigrant community -- many of whom have been essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic -- and provide continuity of quality care, including prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery services. I am calling upon Governor Hochul to fund this urgent need by including Coverage For All in the final budget. New York is healthier, safer, and stronger only when everyone has access to affordable & quality healthcare."

"Every New Yorker deserves access to health care, regardless of their immigration status," said **Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn**. "As the daughter of Haitian immigrants, I believe this bill would further racial justice in our health care system. I am proud to support Coverage for All in the budget, and thank Assemblymember Gottfried and Senator Rivera for championing it in Albany."

"We have a situation right now in which there is a segment of our population that does not have access to affordable health care," said **Assemblymember Chris Burdick**. "People often have to choose between their health or putting food on the table and paying for other necessities. This should not be a choice that they are forced to make. We need Coverage For All. Actual lives depend upon this."

"No one should ever be denied access to affordable health care because of an immigration status. We have an enormous opportunity to finally address this issue in the coming days," said **Assemblymember Kenny Burgos**. "As a proud cosponsor of this bill, I urge the Governor to include Coverage for All in the final state budget. It's long overdue to expand health care access to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, which would also help grow our economy."

"Access to healthcare is a human right that should not be overlooked regardless of one's immigration status," said **Assemblywoman Maritza Davila**. In the time of crisis, as we battled through the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have witnessed, firsthand, the atrocities of the amount of lives lost. Thousands of immigrant families are uninsured and unable to afford the high cost of care because of a failed healthcare system. Health Coverage for All is the pathway we need to take towards inclusion and dignity for all."

"Every New Yorker deserves access to affordable, high-quality, and convenient healthcare — regardless of their class, income, or immigration status," said **Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz**. "Coverage for All is a critical proposal that must be included in our final budget this year. Not only have these over 150k New Yorkers worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic to keep our state going, but by expanding health coverage for all New Yorkers — we will help reduce demand on emergency rooms and lower healthcare costs by helping people access medical treatment early on, before a medical problem gets worse."

"The pandemic reminded us what we long should have known: our health is inextricably connected with the health of our neighbors. Viruses don't check documentation status," said

**Assemblymember Emily Gallagher.** "Every single human being deserves care. We need Coverage for All and we need it now. I proudly join so many of my colleagues in calling on legislative leaders and the Governor to include this life-saving program in the state budget."

"It is crucial that Coverage for All is included in the final budget to ensure all New Yorkers have access to health care," said **Assemblymember Deborah Glick.** "Nobody should have to forgo receiving care because of their immigration status. Healthy New Yorkers make a healthy New York."

"Immigrants are the backbone of New York and deserve full access to basic services like health care," said **Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas.** "I'm proud to co-sponsor A880, the Coverage for All bill, to expand state health insurance coverage to all immigrants in New York, regardless of status. I urge Governor Hochul and legislative leadership to include Coverage for All in the final enacted budget and am grateful to all of the advocates who continue to fight on behalf of New York's immigrant communities."

"The onset of the global pandemic has further emphasized the desperate need for equal access to healthcare across our state," said **Assemblymember Demond Meeks.** "An individual's immigration status should not determine whether they are allowed to receive reliable and equitable medical coverage. Addressing these challenges takes bold government leadership and effective solutions to inspire necessary change for members of our community. When we neglect to care for the health of the people of our communities, we compromise their ability to be self-sufficient, as well as the quality of life for others, promoting the inequity we see on a daily basis. I stand with our families in calling for the inclusion of Coverage for All in the state budget. Now more than ever, we must demonstrate our commitment to the welfare of the people of New York."

"We must not forget about the contributions of our immigrant essential workers - those who were on the front lines when we were in the most terrifying stages of the pandemic," said **Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes.** "We cannot have a just recovery without making sure that healthcare is expanded to our undocumented friends and neighbors. I urge Governor Hochul to acknowledge the tremendous sacrifices of immigrant workers, by passing Coverage for All in this years budget."

"This pandemic has shown us the glaring holes in our for-profit health care system, and that includes the ability to receive basic coverage. Our immigrant communities have been

disproportionately hurt by this coverage gap, and as a result saw among the highest COVID-19 infection and death rates of anyone in our state. This is not a question of whether we can do better, but a crisis situation in which we must do better. We can start by including the Coverage for All bill in the state budget," said **Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou**. "New York should never deny someone health care because they are immigrants, and I call on Governor Hochul to ensure these New Yorkers receive the health care they deserve."

"Excluded workers are an important part of our communities and workforce," said **Assemblymember Steve Otis**. "Providing a system of ongoing health care coverage will end the haphazard and failed system we have for addressing the needs of these families. Inclusion of this program in the state budget will benefit the entire health care system."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare just how critical access to healthcare services is for all New Yorkers," said **Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF - Manhattan)**. "Right now, at least 150,000 low-income New Yorkers are being denied access to health insurance simply because of their immigration status. We can't allow this cruel discrepancy to continue. We must include Coverage for All in our final enacted budget to ensure the health of all New Yorkers is a priority, regardless of immigration status."

"Health equity is key to all New Yorkers getting comprehensive and timely healthcare. In the Assembly I am prioritizing the passage of coverage for all to ensure that all New Yorkers are insured regardless of immigration status. Healthcare should be equitable and available, not a hierarchy of care and services," said **Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright**.

"We must provide affordable health care to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, to ensure healthy communities and a healthy New York. Providing health insurance to all New Yorkers makes good economic sense and it's just the right thing to do, especially now after a health pandemic. I'm glad the Assembly and Senate have included this measure in our budget resolutions, and now we need the Governor to make this a reality. I'm grateful to the advocates and the New York Immigration Coalition for their relentless work fighting for a more just health care system for all," said **Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon**.

"Healthcare must be upheld as a fundamental need and human right, regardless of immigration status," said **Assemblymember Fred W. Thiele**. "With the inclusion of Coverage For All in the final budget, New York now stands to ensure coverage for over 150,000 individuals currently living without access to care, protect healthcare providers from



shouldering the cost of expensive emergency services, and lead the nation in terms of health equity. I urge Governor Hochul and my colleagues in the Legislature to support this effort and, together, pass a budget that bridges this severe and costly disparity."

"Access to quality healthcare is a basic human right no matter someone's immigration or health status," said **Assemblymember Stefani Zinerman**. "In my district, many families rely on the services of essential workers who happen to be immigrants. #Coverage4All ensures healthcare for those who provide care for others. By expanding health insurance to all that dwell in our state, we will improve the quality of life for thousands of people and we will strengthen our recovering economy. Every ten years during the Census, we count immigrants to ensure that we can target our resources where they are needed. They have been counted and they count! The healthier our residents are, the healthier we are as a society."

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**#Coverage4All** is a campaign to expand coverage to all New Yorkers. The campaign is a coalition of community members, community organizations, health care providers, legal service providers, and labor, immigrant, and health care consumer advocates. Our objective is to create a statewide health insurance product for New Yorkers who are excluded from eligibility for coverage because of their immigration status, by enacting A880A/S1572A. A campaign of Health Care for All New York (HCFANY), #Coverage4All is led by the New York Immigration Coalition and Make the Road New York.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2021-S1527

- 
- Introduced
  - ◦ In Committee Assembly

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- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
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