



February 9, 2022

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Carl E. Heastie
Speaker, New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

As a public health organization that works to strengthen public health and increase health equity across New York State, the New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA) urges the Senate and Assembly to include **#Coverage4All in the One House State budgets** (A.880A/S.1572). This would create a state-funded Essential Plan, providing access to health insurance for income-eligible New Yorkers who are currently excluded simply because of their immigration status.

In the third year of our battle against COVID, it's absolutely horrifying that 154,000 low-income New Yorkers statewide continue to not have access to affordable health insurance simply because of their immigration status. New York cannot afford to wait any longer to invest in the health of our residents, workers and families. Immigrants make up 54 percent of essential workers in NY, and fully 70 percent of New York's undocumented work force in essential businesses. These are the workers who have sustained our communities during this global pandemic.

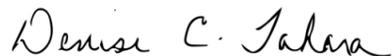
We have an opportunity to learn from other states like California, Minnesota and Illinois by taking bold steps to invest in the health of their immigrant residents by establishing state-only funded programs for certain groups of immigrants, such as young people and older people. We cannot fall behind as we seek to rebuild and recover together. According to [the Citizens Budget Commission and Community Service Society](#), a \$345 million investment from our state's leaders would be a first step towards covering 46,000 immigrant New Yorkers, ensuring we can begin to rebuild and recover together.

Access to health care coverage improves well-being and saves lives. When compared to people with health insurance, people who are uninsured are more likely to receive an initial diagnosis in the advanced stages of a disease, die or suffer permanent impairment after an accident or sudden-onset condition, and live with a chronic condition that could be managed if diagnosed earlier. More than 8,200 New Yorkers died from COVID-19

because they lacked health insurance coverage. We estimate that at least 2,050 of them were undocumented. Coverage for All might have saved these lives.

Effective public health responses must include everyone so that they can seek the care they need when they need it rather than waiting and presenting at emergency departments, the most expensive health setting for their care. Universal coverage, inclusive of all New Yorkers, including essential immigrants, provides a much-needed safety net so that everyone can thrive. Please include A880A/S1572 in the Senate and Assembly One House budgets to ensure everyone in New York State will have access to quality, affordable health care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise C. Tahara".

Denise C. Tahara, PhD
New York State Public Health Association