Immigrant NYers Call on Gov. Cuomo To Ensure Health Coverage for TPS Recipients and Young Adults

With immigrants under attack, NY budget should include measures to ensure health coverage for TPS holders at risk of losing it and young adults currently not eligible for insurance

NEW YORK (March 27th, 2018) – Today, scores of immigrant New Yorkers and advocates with the Coverage for All campaign rallied outside Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Manhattan office to demand that the state budget include measures to ensure health coverage for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders who are at risk because of Donald Trump’s attacks and to expand Child Health Plus (CHP) to age 29. The grassroots coalition rallied and chanted "We are here to stay!" and "Health care is a right!" before delivering approximately 1,000 petitions to the Governor’s office to urge him and the New York State Legislature to protect and support immigrant New Yorkers and their access to healthcare.

The coalition called on Governor Cuomo and legislators to ensure that immigrants who are losing their TPS do not also lose their ability to access health insurance. This can be achieved by creating a state-funded Essential Plan for all New Yorkers whose income is up to 200% of the federal poverty level, regardless of immigration status. The coalition also called for passing legislation to ensure TPS beneficiaries’ continued eligibility for Medicaid; Governor Cuomo should also act to protect young adult immigrants currently not eligible for other forms of insurance. The best way to do this is by expanding Child Health Plus (CHP) coverage to all New Yorkers up to age 29 whose income is up to 400% of the federal poverty level, regardless of immigration status.

Heydi Alvarado Correa, member of Make the Road New York, said: "I am very lucky that my 2 year old child has Child Health Plus and my 4 month old baby, who was born here, has Medicaid. Having health insurance for my children helps me so much since they can get their regular check ups, vaccines and medicine. However, I am 25 years old and am not eligible for health insurance due to my immigration status. If the state were to expand the age of child health plus to 29, I would be eligible for insurance. As a young mother, I want to make sure I remain healthy for my family. Having access to health insurance would be a huge relief for me, and I wouldn’t need to worry about choosing between going to the doctor or being left with debilitating medical debt."

Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition, said: "Immigrant health needs to be a priority for the state Legislature and the Cuomo Administration. The Governor took an important step in protecting Medicaid coverage for DACA recipients under attack from Washington. Now our state leadership needs to do everything in its power to protect other immigrant New Yorkers. There are bills in the legislature to protect the health coverage of New Yorkers losing TPS and to expand insurance options to young adult immigrants who currently have no affordable coverage..."
options. The idea that there is no space for immigrant health in the state budget is simply not true. If immigrant health is a real priority for our elected officials, these policies will be adopted."

Sarika Saxena, Staff Attorney and Project Manager at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, said: "2019 will be a key year as the future of thousands of immigrant youth and TPS recipients remains in the balance. Washington is stuck in a partisan gridlock, but we as a state can stand up for our parents, friends, and neighbors. We must continue to uphold our progressive values and provide for our most vulnerable residents as our state constitution requires. By including immigrant healthcare in the 2019 budget, the Governor and our legislators will show that they too share their constituents’ vision to build an equitable society that serves everyone."

Rebecca Novick, representing the Legal Aid Society, said: "The Legal Aid Society’s immigrant clients face devastating health consequences when they lack access to affordable and consistent health care. We are proud to be part of the Coverage 4 All campaign fighting for coverage for all young immigrants and for those losing Temporary Protected Status because of callous actions by the federal government."

Earlier this year, Dreamers in New York received good news when Governor Cuomo announced that income-eligible DACA beneficiaries would continue to be eligible for state-funded Medicaid. But the announcement did not mean that all Dreamers and immigrants will have access to health care. TPS holders need a similar guarantee, and further action is needed to ensure that all Dreamers and TPS holders have access to health insurance.

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Make the Road New York (MRNY) builds the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. We have 22,000+ members and operate five community centers in Bushwick, Brooklyn; Jackson Heights, Queens; Port Richmond, Staten Island; and Brentwood, Long Island.

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