

HEALTH CARE
FOR AMERICA **NOW**

New York State Network

May 5, 2020

Hon. [firstname] [lastname]
U.S House of Representatives [or U.S. Senate]
[district office street address]
[city/town], New York [zip]

Dear Sen./Rep. [lastname]:

Thank you for all you and your colleagues have done in recent weeks to respond to the new COVID-19 pandemic sweeping across our nation. As you know, New York has been the epicenter of its outbreak in the U.S., particularly in the downstate New York City metropolitan area. Millions of New Yorkers are now benefiting from your efforts.

In particular, we want to thank you for the increase in Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP) provided to states, and for the strong “maintenance of effort” (MOE) requirement that was paired with it. We greatly appreciate your inclusion of the MOE and your continued support for it in the face of rigorous efforts by Governor Cuomo to effectively eliminate or weaken it. We believe he is very mistaken in his position.

We also know there is much more yet to do to fully mitigate the pandemic’s many adverse impacts on New York State and everyday New Yorkers. We write now concerning health care issues needing to be immediately addressed in a next omnibus COVID-19 response bill that we understand is now in development. We urge that you prioritize the following actions:

Support, expand, and protect state Medicaid programs:

- Substantially increase the current FMAP increase for the traditional Medicaid populations (aged, blind, disabled) and their services, with automatic adjustments based on state economic conditions, and increase the FMAP to 100% for the expansion population under the Affordable Care Act (ACA.)
- Maintain the current, strong MOE, with NO modifications, including any exceptions for New York.
- Lengthen the period for both of the above until the economy recovers, as measured by a restored labor market.
- Allow states to use federal Emergency Medicaid funding to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for all immigrants, and provide a 100% FMAP match for it.
- Enact a permanent “counter-cyclical trigger” for automatic FMAP increases and an accompanying MOE whenever an economic downturn/recession occurs or some sort of natural or manmade disaster happens that increases the number of low-income uninsured.

Provide support for those losing health care coverage, and expand access to health services:

- **Cover the newly-uninsured via one or more of the following options:**
 - Provide 100% COBRA premium relief for laid-off and furloughed workers for the full-length of the economic downturn until they are able to return to their jobs.
 - Improve ACA financial assistance to make private coverage more affordable to purchase and use.
 - Open up state and federal ACA marketplaces for enrollment, and support community-based outreach and enrollment programs.
 - Expand eligibility for state Basic Health Plans (“Essential Plan” in New York.)
 - Open up Medicare to provide temporary coverage during the pandemic and recession.
- **Assure access to full COVID-19 testing and treatment:**
 - Protect patients from surprise medical bills for any testing and treatment.
 - Assure that treatments and vaccines are widely available by precluding any exclusive patents, price-gouging, and profiteering by manufacturers.
 - Enact the “Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act” (S.3544/HR.6305)
- **Protect and support our health care system:**
 - Assure that all frontline health care workers and other essential workers have adequate personal protective equipment, in according with OSHA requirements.
 - Provide additional financial support to safety net hospitals and community health centers.

On a more general level, we also support the following steps:

- Provide \$500 billion of general relief funding to states and localities.
- Prioritize help to those communities bearing the brunt of the pandemic, and those left out or behind in previous COVID-19 bills, especially immigrants and their families.
- Increase funding for and expansion of SNAP and other food assistance programs.
- Expand paid family and sick leave programs.
- Expand Unemployment Insurance programs.
- Provide financial relief to low and middle-income mortgage holders and renters, and fund programs to provide housing for people experiencing homelessness so they can properly social distance.
- Fund states so that all upcoming elections can be conducted by mail, and require that all registered voters be automatically sent mail-in ballots.
- Fund the US Postal Service to keep it fully operational without having to take on loans.

We, the undersigned organizations across New York State, stand ready to work with your office to advance the above goals. Please contact us with any questions or comments you may have. We look forward to hearing from you and continued mutual support and collaboration.

Sincerely,

[See list of groups below on following pages]

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services
Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled
Brooklynwide Interagency Council on Aging
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
Campaign for New York Health
Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Elder Law & Justice
Center for Independence of the Disabled New York
Children's Defense Fund of New York
Chinese-American Planning Council
Center for Independence of the Disabled New York
Citizens Action of New York
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Commission on the Public's Health System in New York City
Catholic Peace Community of the Southern Tier
Democratic Socialists of America - Staten Island branch
Disabled in Action of Metropolitan New York
DSI International Inc.
Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance
East Harlem Community Organizations Active in Disasters
East Harlem Community Health Committee
East Harlem Health Outreach Partnership
Empire State Indivisible
Family Health Centers at NYU Langone
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies
Fiscal Policy Institute
Foundation for Integrative AIDS Research
Goddard Riverside Community Center
Grassroots Action New York
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
Greater NYC for Change
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
Health and Welfare Council of Long Island
Health Care for All New York
Hispanic Federation
Housing Works
Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley
Indivisible Binghamton
Indivisible Mohawk Valley
Jewish Social Action Coalition
Justice and Peace Resource Center
League of Women Voters of Putnam County
League of Women Voters of St. Lawrence County
Long Island Center For Independent Living
Long Island Progressive Coalition

Medicaid Matters New York
Metro New York Health Care for All
National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, New York City Chapter
National Association of Social Workers, New York State
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services
New York Association on Independent Living
New York City Democratic Socialists of America
New York Communities for Change
New York Gray Panthers
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Legal Assistance Group
New York Progressive Action Network Greene
New York State Alliance for Retired Americans
New York State Council of Churches
New York State Nurses Association
New York StateWide Senior Action Council
Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson
Northern Regional Center for Independent Living
Northern Rivers Family of Services
Northwest Bronx Indivisible
Peace Action of Staten Island
Polonians Organized to Minister to Our Community, Inc.
Professional Staff Congress, Local 2334, AFT
Progressive Doctors
ROCitizen
South Central Brooklyn United for Progress
Southern Tier Independence Center
Taconic Resources for Independence, Inc.
Unitarian Fellowship of Poughkeepsie
United Auto Workers Region 9A
United Spinal Association Hudson Valley Chapter
Upper West Side MoveOn/Indivisible Action Group
Uptown Progressive Action
Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project
Westchester for Change