

Immigrant Inclusion in Federal Health Reform

There are nearly 600,000 uninsured immigrant adults who live, work, and raise families in New York, but are not yet regularized. The rate of uninsurance among New York's immigrant families is roughly three times higher than that of those who are native-born.

Federal health reform may not address this issue. Yet without immigrant inclusion at the federal level, the problem of the uninsured and underinsured will never truly be resolved for all of us.

There are several ways in which federal health reform can address immigrants:

Repeal the 5-year waiting period for legal immigrants to qualify for Medicaid coverage.

New York provides public health insurance to all immigrant children and to lawful immigrant adults, with State-only funds and no federal matching funds. Federal matching funds are disallowed because of the federal 5-year waiting period rule.

HCFANY urges that federal health reform remove the 5-year waiting period to support New York for doing the right thing by covering most of New York's low-income working families.

Immigrants should qualify for federal subsidies.

Federal health reform may only permit those immigrants who have fully completed the naturalization or immigration process to qualify for federal subsidies to purchase insurance.

The citizenship process is a long and arduous procedure, during which immigrants are paying taxes and contributing to the economy. All immigrants should be able to purchase health insurance at an affordable price without restrictions based on immigration status.

HCFANY urges the inclusion of immigrants in the federal subsidy program, regardless of where they stand in the naturalization and immigration process.

Repeal citizen documentation requirements for health coverage.

In 2006, a new citizenship documentation requirement was added to Medicaid. This rule has made getting health coverage unduly burdensome for citizens and immigrants alike. In order to ensure maximum take up of insurance, citizen documentation requirements should be repealed for public insurance coverage, the subsidies, and employer sponsored coverage alike.

HCFANY urges the repeal of citizenship documentation for all health requirements.



All New Yorkers should have the option to purchase health insurance for their families at an affordable price.



All of New York's working families deserve access to quality, affordable health care.

Expand and strengthen public programs.

In the 1990s, Congress terminated federal matching funding for States which allow eligible legal immigrants to receive public insurance. This left many low-income immigrants with only the fragmented safety-net system of clinics and hospitals to turn to for care.

Funding for the safety-net system should be preserved and strengthened. Without federal health reform that is inclusive of all immigrants, many will be forced to continue to receive care through this safety-net system.

HCFANY urges that federal health reform should include immigrants, but if it does not, it should provide adequate funding to strengthen the safety net institutions which serve all New Yorkers.