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Community Service Society of New York ☞ Consumers Union ☞ Empire Justice Center ☞ Make the Road New York
Medicare Rights Center ☞ Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign
New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage ☞ New York Immigration Coalition ☞ Project CHARGE
Public Policy and Education Fund of New York/Citizen Action of New York
Raising Women's Voices-New York ☞ Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy ☞ Young Invincibles

**Memorandum in Support of A. 10474/S. 8357
May 2020**

An act to amend the social services law, in relation to eligibility for the basic health program; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon the expiration thereof

Health Care for All New York (HCFANY) is a statewide coalition of consumer-focused organizations dedicated to achieving quality, affordable health coverage for all New Yorkers, and ensuring that the concerns of real New Yorkers are heard and reflected in policy conversations. **We strongly support A.10474/S.8357, which would expand eligibility for the Essential Plan until 60 days past the state declared emergency to individuals who have or have had a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 and who are ineligible for federal financial participation in the basic health program due to their immigration status.**

Prior to the COVID-19 emergency, immigrants formed one of the largest groups of uninsured in New York, due in part to their exclusion from health coverage in federal law and policies based on immigration status. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing health disparities in New York, as lack of access to affordable insurance and health care discourages individuals from seeking testing and treatment for the virus.¹ Further, immigrants are more likely to live in overcrowded neighborhoods and work in essential roles, increasing their vulnerability to COVID-19.² Immigrant communities are being disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of health, mortality, and financial hardship.³

This act can help New York fill this coverage gap and ameliorate racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 fatalities by opening the Essential Plan to income-eligible New Yorkers who have or have had COVID-19, regardless of immigration status. This builds on the state's leadership in extending Emergency Medicaid to low-income immigrants by providing full coverage to those who have or have had COVID-19, not just coverage linked directly to COVID-19.

¹ "What Issues Will Uninsured People Face with Testing and Treatment for COVID-19?" Kaiser Family Foundation, April 8, 2020, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/fact-sheet/what-issues-will-uninsured-people-face-with-testing-and-treatment-for-covid-19/>.

² "Protecting NYC's Most Vulnerable Populations During COVID-19" NYC Comptroller's Office, April 15, 2020, https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/protecting-nycs-most-vulnerable-populations-during-covid-19/#_ftn6

³ "Despite Their Impact From COVID-10, Undocumented New Yorkers Have Few Options For Financial Help," Gothamist, April 24, 2020, <https://gothamist.com/news/despite-their-impact-covid-19-undocumented-new-yorkers-have-few-options-financial-help>.