



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

New York Health Act
A.6058 (Gottfried)/S.5474 (Rivera)
March 10, 2022

The Community Health Care Association of NYS (CHCANYS) supports the New York Health Act, A.6058 (Gottfried)/S.5474 (Rivera), which would establish a universal single payer health plan to ensure that all New Yorkers will have access to health care.

CHCANYS is the statewide association of New York's 70+ federally qualified health centers (FQHC), also known as community health centers (CHCs). CHCs provide a full range of primary and preventive health care and enabling services for more than 2.1 million patients at over 800 sites. Located in low-income and medically underserved areas, CHCs provide quality and affordable healthcare services for all – regardless of insurance status, immigration status, or ability to pay. Among our patients, 90% are low income, 68% are people of color (35% Hispanic/Latinx, 26% Black, and 7% other), 13% are uninsured, and 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

Reliable, affordable, comprehensive insurance coverage for all New Yorkers is a key step in improving access to primary and preventive care. People who are both poor and uninsured are more likely to delay needed medical care for chronic diseases and be hospitalized for a condition that could have been avoided with timely health care. Uninsured persons receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at a more advanced stage of illness and once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care and have a higher mortality rate. Moreover, lack of insurance leads to higher rates of emergency room use, especially for conditions that could have been treated more successfully in a primary care setting.

Community health centers have robust outreach and enrollment programs and seek to enroll all eligible individuals in appropriate health insurance plans. Nevertheless, 13% of CHC patients are uninsured. Health centers do not collect information on immigration status but have strong indicators that the majority of uninsured patients at CHCs are not eligible for coverage due to immigration status.

CHCANYS supports efforts to ensure that all New Yorkers have health insurance coverage. However, expanding coverage alone does not guarantee that patients will have access to needed care. In addition to coverage expansion efforts, CHCANYS recommends that the State take immediate steps to enhance access to care – meaning that timely, high quality primary care is available to **everyone**, regardless of geographic location, economic circumstances, or race/ethnic background. Increasing primary care capacity and presence (in person and remotely) in underserved communities must be at the forefront of any healthcare system reform efforts. Comprehensive primary care has been proven to improve health outcomes while reducing costly emergency department visits and preventable hospitalizations.

CHCANYS supports the New York Health Act, A.6058/S.5474, which would bring comprehensive health insurance coverage to all New Yorkers. We look forward to additional conversations to ensure that all New Yorkers also have a primary care home.

With questions or for follow up, please reach out to Marie Mongeon, Senior Director of Policy:
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