

Good afternoon, my name is Briana Carp. I am the Director of Legal Information at Comprehensive Youth Development, a non-profit that partners with New York City public high schools to prepare young adults to secure a successful future for themselves and their families. I work at our Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High school location, where most of the youth we serve are immigrants age 17 – 24. I am also here today as a member of the Fund Excluded Workers coalition. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today’s Workforce Hearing.

I am testifying today in support of an excluded worker bail out fund, which would deliver desperately needed income replacement assistance for New Yorkers ineligible for unemployment benefits. This includes New Yorkers that are undocumented and recently incarcerated, as well as those who operate within the cash economy and families that have lost their primary breadwinners due to the coronavirus pandemic. Senator Jessica Ramos has introduced bill SXXX to create this fund and Assembly member Carmen de la Rosa will introduce an equivalent bill in the Assembly.

Excluded workers, like many of the people my organization works with, have gone nine months without any support and can wait no longer: this fund must be included in this year’s budget. Here’s why: Many of the immigrant youth and families my organization works with have been struggling to pay rent, buy food, and pay their phone bills since the COVID-19 crisis began but are ineligible for Unemployment and other benefits. Fear and desperation are at an all-time high as people panic about how to cover necessities after losing their jobs or having their hours dramatically reduced. Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School, the school I work in, is a transfer high school for older youth. A lot of our students have struggled to attend class and do their homework since they have had to find jobs to help their family cover expenses. For example, I spoke to a 19-year-old student to see why she her attendance had gone down and why she had many incomplete assignments. She told me that her father had been laid off but was ineligible for unemployment. She had to get a job in a factory to help the family afford food and rent. After working a full day, it was hard to do her schoolwork. Additionally, many of our graduates are delaying college because they must work. I spoke to a senior about his graduation plans and he said he wanted to go to college but was going to wait because he had to get a second job at a supermarket to help his family with expenses.

A direct cash payment would mean that the youth and families I work with would have less stress and fear about paying for basic expenses. Less of our students would have to leave or delay school to work. Young people and their families would feel more confident they could pay rent, buy groceries and pay the electricity bill.

These stories are not unique: 597,000 undocumented New Yorkers are shut out of unemployment benefits even though they pay taxes into the system. Nearly 20,000 recently incarcerated New Yorkers released before or during the pandemic and struggling to find stable employment are ineligible as well, since you need work history to qualify for unemployment. People who work for cash -- street vendors, domestic workers, and other New Yorkers -- who cannot report sufficient earnings or a job are also left out. Excluded workers provide essential services including delivery, cleaning, laundry, construction, warehousing, food preparation and more.

The Assembly, Senate and Governor must deliver long-overdue relief: our members have received nothing. Our coalition is asking for \$3.5 billion dollars to create a fund that:

- Delivers flat rate monthly cash payments direct to families
- Includes retroactive payments from the onset of COVID unemployment crisis, continuing at least through the end of the state of emergency
- Uses flexible application and proof requirements given the urgency of this crisis

We believe it is time to tax the rich to fund the poor: New York billionaires have grown wealthier during the pandemic, while excluded workers struggle to put food on the table. We wholeheartedly support the Mark to Market tax as one way forward. The Invest in Our New York Act includes 5 other new, progressive recurring revenue raises that can be used to create this fund and support other community needs, such as rent relief, equitable school funding and more. Our priority is bailing out excluded workers: we are counting on you, our elected representatives, to find a way to fund it. Families' ability to survive and put food on the table depends on it.

To summarize, I submit this testimony in support of an excluded worker bailout fund, as described in forthcoming legislation from Senator Ramos and Assembly member de la Rosa. Thank you for your time.