



Health Access
27-40 Hoyt Avenue South
Astoria, NY 11102
Tel: (718) 396-5041

February 25, 2021

By Email:

Honorable NY. Senators
Albany Office
188 State Street, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

RE: HANAC Testimony Funding Support Letter/ Legislative Budget Hearing/ Health Committee

To the Honorable Finance Senators Committee:

I trust that this correspondence finds you very well. My name is Enrique Jerves, and I am the Program Director for HANAC's Health Access Program. I am humbly submitting this correspondence to serve as a testimonial correspondence supporting the request to restore the Article 6 budget cut for Fiscal Year 2022. The cuts to the Article 6 will have a significant impact on the City's Access Health Initiative. The budget cuts will negatively impact the outreach efforts for HIV/AIDS intervention services, infant and maternal health support, viral hepatitis campaigns, and COVID-19 pandemic healthcare resources that are desperately needed for people that have the COVID-19 pandemic. While the actual numbers cannot be stated for certain, early estimates indicate that at least \$3.4 million of this funding is at risk of being lost due to these state cuts.

As you are keenly aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the New York State Healthcare system. While members from all different communities have suffered during this pandemic, the immigrant community is one of the groups that have been most disparately impacted. Historically the underserved immigrant communities face incredible obstacles in receiving adequate health care during regular times; during this pandemic, the immigrant community has faced even more significant difficulties obtaining primary care, specialist support, hospitalization, and COVID-19 healthcare resources needed for people that have the COVID-19 pandemic. My experience helping the immigrant community allowed me to learn the needs in this community. The immigrants usually encounter problems related to language support, and most cases have expressed concerns about public charge policies.

To reiterate, before the onset of the COVID Pandemic, immigrant communities were already vulnerable to illnesses such as but not limited to depression, substance abuse, and other negative factors such as high blood pressure or diabetes. Now the mental health experts fear that many

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more will be prone to trauma-related disorders due to this pandemic. For example, as we have heard on the news, immigrants are impacted by the loss of a family member, loss of employment, lack of health coverage, lack of access to testing, and most cases have no information for the vaccination process. During the pandemic, we assisted in providing essential social services during the pandemic. We helped many immigrants to obtain primary care, health insurance and referrals for financial assistance available in New York City programs. At the height of the pandemic, our programs continued to provide essential services for the immigrant communities. These individuals may be at higher risk of developing long-term challenges. The Health Care Act ("HCA") aims to ensure all of us get access to health care regardless of the status or the income perceived per person, but more importantly, HCA was enacted to prevent deaths. The costs involved in health care in New York State are already high; it is even worse for individuals who do not qualify for health insurance.

This cut will impact the program finance and we would not be able to continue helping those who struggle with health conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, or who have a prior history of substance abuse which they might increase the risk of more ongoing distress due to the pandemic triggering factors. Many uninsured communities have yet received medical coverage due to lack of insurance eligibility or just they are afraid of immigration policies. Your support is a "must" in the middle of these challenging situations.

Thank you so much for allowing us to provide this testimony, and please do not hesitate to let me know if you need any additional information that you may need in support of this request.

Respectfully Submitted,



Enrique Jerves
HANAC Health Access Program Director
718-396-5041
ejerves@hanac.org