

Hearing: Workforce Development

January 31st, 2022

Julissa Bisono, Make the Road New York

Good afternoon, my name is Julissa Bisono. I am the Co-Director of Organizing at Make the Road New York. We represent over 24,000 members fighting for dignity and respect in our communities.

At the start of the pandemic, we witnessed how thousands of immigrant workers were forced to the frontline with nothing to survive. I am here on behalf of the 90 Make the Road members who passed to COVID. I am here on behalf of thousands of suffering families who are STILL excluded from relief, and are now facing eviction. Many who are not granted the same protections to healthcare or unemployment benefits.

When New York leaders passed the Excluded Worker fund, thousands of families got back on their feet. People were able to leave abusive relationships and workplaces. Cover funeral expenses and medical bills because of the fund. But it was not enough.

Over 75,000 eligible applicants to the Fund were denied because the money ran out. They had applied in the last week, and were just days late. That alone demonstrates the dire need for this relief. There are thousands more who have yet to receive any help.

Excluded workers are still in crisis.

By replenishing the Excluded Workers Fund with an additional \$3 billion dollars, you are investing in the recovery of over 100,000 more hard working New Yorkers.

This Fund has inspired over five states across the country to pass similar relief measures, but we urge the legislature to take it one step further here. Unemployment Insurance was born out of the Great Depression, so let's learn from this crisis and include the most vulnerable workers in our safety net - **for good.**

New York state legislators must pass a permanent alternative to unemployment insurance by passing the "Excluded No More" legislation, which is sponsored by Sen. Jessica Ramos and Assemblymember Karines Reyes and awaiting a bill number.

It's common sense legislation that will greatly impact our membership. We are talking about survival and stability for our communities- not luxury.

The Excluded Worker Unemployment Program has received overwhelming support by the Black, Puerto Rican and Hispanic Caucus and was included in this year's "People's Budget."

The Assembly, Senate and Governor must deliver justice to workers who are still awaiting COVID relief and a true safety net for excluded workers in the long run. **To summarize, I submit this testimony in support of \$3 billion more for the Excluded Workers Fund and the Excluded No More legislation. Thank you for your time.**