



Media contacts:

Theo Oshiro, Make the Road New York, 718-418-7651 x218; 347-806-0125,

[Theo.Oshiro@maketheroadny.org](mailto:Theo.Oshiro@maketheroadny.org)

Lana Gersten, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, 212-784-5714,

[LGersten@GroupGordon.com](mailto:LGersten@GroupGordon.com)

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**Make the Road New York and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Applaud the Governor's Decision to Include the Accessible Prescription Labels Proposal in the Executive Budget**

**Inclusion in the Budget will Vastly Improve Access and Quality of Healthcare for People of Color, Immigrants, Seniors, and People with Disabilities Across New York State**

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*New York, NY – January 17, 2012* – Make the Road New York (MRNY), New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), and a coalition of over 100 organizations and individuals, strongly support Governor Andrew Cuomo's decision to include the Medicaid Redesign Team's (MRT) Accessible Prescription Labels Proposal in the Executive Budget. The proposal—also known as SafeRx—will reduce health disparities and improve access to care for people of color, immigrants, seniors, and people with disabilities, among others.

SafeRx was voted on and recommended by the MRT last November as part of a full slate of proposals to address health disparities. SafeRx will ensure that prescription drug labels are easier to understand for patients with limited English proficiency, and makes important strides toward ensuring accessibility for seniors, people with disabilities, and many others. The Governor's decision to include SafeRx in his budget marks a significant step forward towards the goal of redesigning the health delivery system in New York State to save costs and lives in the long term. SafeRx requires that:

- All chain and mail order pharmacies, as well as emergency orally prescribed prescriptions, provide translation and interpretation services for limited English proficient (LEP) patients;
- For the Department of Education and Department of Health to develop requirements related to the sale, distribution and dispensing of drugs to address the special needs of persons who are elderly, of limited vision or of limited English proficiency; and
- Prescription pads be modified to allow prescribers to indicate if a patient is LEP.

The Governor once again showed that the State of New York is a place that respects all people, regardless of their age or language they speak, and that the State cares about ensuring that public services are available and easily accessible for all New Yorkers. This decision shows that the Governor and the State of New York are committed to improving health outcomes for low income communities, seniors, and immigrants. Injuries related to medication used in the outpatient setting result in over 700,000 emergency room visits annually, and over 100,000 of these emergency room visits result in hospitalizations. By including the Accessible Prescription Labels Proposal in the Executive Budget, the Governor is taking a significant step towards preventing such misfortunes, and his actions will save the health care system valuable dollars and save lives.

“By including SafeRx in the Executive Budget, the Governor has reaffirmed his commitment to creating a cost effective and safe health care system for New York,” said Nisha Agarwal, Director of the Health Justice Program at NYLPI and a member of the MRT disparities workgroup that developed the proposal. “This is a victory for all New Yorkers, especially people of color, immigrants, seniors, people with disabilities and many others whose lives are literally on the line when they receive inadequate healthcare.”

Theo Oshiro, Deputy Director of Make the Road New York added, “With the inclusion of SafeRx in the Executive Budget, Governor Cuomo adds to his record of protecting New York’s immigrant communities. This common sense language access policy will produce better health outcomes for all New Yorkers and save precious Medicaid dollars.”

### **About Make the Road New York**

Make the Road New York builds the power of working class and Latino communities to achieve dignity and justice through the provision of survival services, policy innovation, community organizing, and transformative education. MRNY is a membership-based organization with 8,000+ members and a coalition of 600 small business members who have committed to long-term participation in our work. Our work is rooted in three of the highest need immigrant communities in New York City—Bushwick, Brooklyn; Jackson Heights, Queens; and Port Richmond, Staten Island – where we operate welcoming storefront community centers.

### **About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) advances equality and civil rights, with a focus on health justice, disability rights and environmental justice, through the power of community lawyering and partnerships with the private bar. Through community lawyering, NYLPI puts its legal, policy and community organizing expertise at the service of New York City communities and individuals.