

NYLPI

**JUSTICE THROUGH
COMMUNITY POWER**

**Testimony of Yleana Roman, Health Justice & Immigration Staff Attorney
On behalf of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
to the New York City Council’s Committee on Health**

Good afternoon, my name is Yleana Roman, and I am the Health Justice & Immigration Staff Attorney at the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Thank you to Chairperson Levine and the Committee members for the opportunity to present testimony today.

II. NYLPI’s Work as Part of the Immigrant Health Initiative: UndocuCare

NYLPI is privileged to be part of the **City Council’s immigrant health initiative** and we thank you for that support. **NYLPI and our partners received \$700,000 in funding last year.** This support has allowed us to expand our work educating immigrant New Yorkers with serious health conditions, their healthcare providers, and legal service providers about healthcare access. Your support has also led to increased enrollment by eligible immigrants to state-funded Medicaid. The improved access to Medicaid has had life-changing and often life-saving effects in the lives of our clients.

Through this funding we have been able to train and give informative presentations on immigrant access to healthcare to hundreds of community based organizations, health care providers, and legal services providers. We also provide comprehensive screenings and legal representation to individuals, particularly those who are in health emergencies, including holistic support for their intersecting needs. Our individual cases are complex given that we deal with clients in health emergencies who are stuck between two complicated bureaucratic systems. We have developed a nuanced practice taking the cases no one else can.

For example, our client Mr. M, is an undocumented father of two U.S. citizen children and the husband to a U.S. wife. He is a resident of NYC and was suffering from heart failure. He urgently needed a heart transplant. We filed a family petition for Mr. M and worked with healthcare navigators to immediately get him enrolled in Medicaid. Once Mr. M had Medicaid, he was able to be placed on a heart transplant list, and in the summer of 2018, Mr. M had a successful heart transplant. As a result of our work, Mr. M is living and thriving with his family and continues to receive Medicaid, and the appropriate care he needs.

III. Improving Healthcare for NYC Residents in Detention Through the Immigrant Health Initiative

The Immigrant Health Initiative funding also supports NYLPI's work seeking to improve access to healthcare in immigration detention facilities. As federal immigration enforcement arrests and removals continue to surge under the Trump administration, the human rights crisis in detention centers worsens. For NYC residents held in detention, NYLPI provides individual and systemic advocacy to improve health care. We continue to do outreach across the city to support immigrants and raise awareness regarding the deplorable conditions in detention. We have built and continue to expand our volunteer network of medical professionals to perform reviews and consultations for people in detention in support of advocacy efforts. We also provide support for City Council-funded New York Immigrant Family Unity Project attorneys and have helped secure the release of fifteen people from immigration detention in large part because our medical evaluations help an adjudicator understand that the denial of adequate medical care is unacceptable.

For instance, we received a request from an immigration attorney for a referral to a medical provider for a client with diabetes and several other serious health conditions on a Thursday afternoon for a bond hearing the following Tuesday. Within 24 hours, we gathered the medical records and secured a junior and senior doctor to complete a review and advocacy letter. They completed the six-page letter by Monday, which was used in the client's bond hearing. At the hearing, the Immigration Judge granted bond partly based on the medical evidence and the client was released shortly. Another client was detained at Orange County Detention Facility and was torn apart from his long-term partner and their children for several months. This client has chronic knee pain and was further harmed in the course of his arrest and detention. With the help of a medical volunteer, an evaluation was performed and submitted for

his immigration case. A legal advocacy letter was also submitted on his behalf. With our support, our client was released on bond.

We thank the Council again for this tremendous assistance, and **ask that the funding continue in FY 2020** for both NYLPI and our community partners: Academy of Medical and Public Health Services, Bronx Health Reach, Grameen Vida Sana, and Plaza del Sol.

IV. Conclusion

Thank you for your time and we look forward to continuing to work the Council to improve immigrant New Yorkers' access to health care.

Please contact Yleana Roman (yroman@nylpi.org) at (212) 244-4664 for further information or discussion.

About NYLPI

For more than 40 years, NYLPI has been a leading civil rights advocate for New Yorkers marginalized by race, immigration status, poverty, disabilities, and neighborhood pollution. NYLPI pioneered the practice of community lawyering in the five boroughs of New York City. These communities shape our priorities, and their struggles for justice demand innovative solutions. Our interdisciplinary teams of advocates use every tool available – community organizing, impact litigation and individual representation, policy advocacy, media, pro bono partnerships, and public education – to solve seemingly intractable problems, develop leaders, and build collective power to achieve justice. We strive to achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, create equal access to health care, ensure immigrant opportunity, strengthen local nonprofits, and secure environmental justice for low-income communities and communities of color. **To learn more about NYLPI, visit www.nylpi.org.**