



**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF A. 880/S. 1572,**  
**Relates to the Coverage of healthcare services for individuals whose immigration status**  
**renders them ineligible.**  
**January 2022**

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) strongly supports **A. 880/S. 1572**, to expand Essential Plan coverage to income-eligible New Yorkers who are otherwise ineligible because of their immigration status. More than 400,000 New Yorkers are undocumented and uninsured. By allocating \$462 million New York policymakers can make them eligible for quality, affordable coverage through a state-funded Essential Plan. A state-funded Essential Plan would leverage \$482 million in federal Emergency Medicaid funds to lower the cost of the overall program. According to the [Urban Institute](#), insuring 110,000 uninsured people would save approximately \$318 million in uncompensated care costs. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, excluding immigrants is unethical given that they contribute over \$1 billion annually in state and local taxes.

NYLPI is a community-driven civil rights organization with a Health Justice Program that brings a racial equity and immigrant justice focus to health care advocacy. We address the human rights crisis in immigration detention; operate a medical-legal-community partnership to increase access to healthcare in immigration detention; connect undocumented and uninsured immigrants with serious health conditions to state funded healthcare; and advocate for healthcare coverage for all New Yorkers.

Immigrant New Yorkers have been at the forefront of the state's fight against COVID-19, representing more than 50% of the state's essential workers and playing a key role in all sectors of our battle against the pandemic, from food production and delivery to construction and frontline health care provision. This ongoing exposure has contributed to the disparate outcomes in COVID-19 infection and death, which have disproportionately afflicted immigrant communities of color. Another important driver of this inequity is the ongoing disparity in access to healthcare services caused by the state's persistent and pernicious exclusion from health insurance coverage of New Yorkers who do not qualify because of their immigration status. Having health insurance is an important predictor of having regular access to care and controlled chronic health conditions. The single greatest predictor of mortality among people who contract COVID-19 is the existence of an underlying health condition. The connection is clear –by failing to provide meaningful ongoing access to affordable health services through coverage, the state is

exacerbating the COVID-19 crisis. According to a 2021 report by [Families USA](#), more than 8,200 New Yorkers died from COVID-19 due to lack of health coverage and approximately 2,700 of those people are undocumented immigrants. The pandemic presents a grim opportunity to see the life-and-death consequences of this inaction.

S.1572/A. 880 offer an opportunity for New York State to seize the moment (other states have already moved in this direction, including California and Illinois) and take a step towards equity in healthcare access for the communities suffering most acutely from this crisis by ensuring access to affordable health insurance coverage.

NYLPI therefore adamantly supports these bills. For more information, please contact Amber Khan, Director, Health Justice Program, at [akhan@nylpi.org](mailto:akhan@nylpi.org) or call (212) 336 9305. To learn more about NYLPI, please visit: <http://www.nylpi.org>