



New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
151 West 30th Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001-4017

Testimony of Karina Albistegui Adler, Sr. Health Advocate of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest to the New York City Council Committee on Health Jointly with the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction on March 21, 2023, regarding the New York City FY24 Budget

Chair Schulman, Chair Lee and distinguished members of the council thank you for the opportunity to testify on the mayor's proposed budget. I am a Senior Health Advocate in the Health Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). It is an honor to speak on behalf of our client communities today.

Thanks to the City Council's generous support for our Immigrant Health Initiative (IHI), my colleagues and I have been able to help hundreds of undocumented New Yorkers with serious health conditions improve their health through access to comprehensive health insurance, direct immigration representation, and individual health advocacy. Welcoming and compassionately serving the thousands of newly arrived migrants in addition to longtime members of our communities is a priority for us. Your continued support as we seek an enhancement in our funding will be crucial in meeting the growing need.

NYLPI's Direct Services Work has Expanded to Meet a Growing Need for Healthcare Access in New York City

Between 2020 and 2022 services supported by the IHI have seen extensive demand and growth. In that time frame, we launched our TGNCI+ campaign, a program that provides direct legal services to transgender, gender-nonconforming, intersex (TGNCI), and undocumented people living with HIV. Our Medical Provider Network has supported hundreds of detained individuals. We re-launched our Medical Deferred Action campaign to help undocumented and uninsured New Yorkers in need of organ transplants to qualify for state-funded Medicaid and Essential Plan. Most recently, we launched a Transplant Pipeline in partnership with the kidney transplant program at SUNY Downstate Medical Center to secure a culturally competent pathway for undocumented New Yorkers to obtain life-saving kidney transplants.

NYLPI's Community Education and Capacity Building Work Has Helped Thousands of New Yorkers in the Community and in Immigration Jails

In addition to our direct service work, in the past two years IHI funding has helped us reach thousands more through community education and capacity-building work which includes our collaboration with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) on the "[Healthcare is for You](#)" pamphlet; a free Spanish and English language online and print resource that explains PRUCOL based insurance eligibility for undocumented people. Our medical provider training, where we have trained hundreds of medical providers and social workers at Montefiore Medical Center, the Bronx Health Collective, Bellevue, and Kings County Dialysis Centers, and caseworkers at the

AIDS Center of Queens County and Hispanic AIDS Forum on access to healthcare for undocumented people. Through our legal presentations, we have also trained 80 attorneys at Weil Goshen and Manges, Debevoise & Plimpton, and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison to represent undocumented New Yorkers who need kidney transplants in Medical Deferred Action applications. Your funding supported the re-issue of our popular Health Care Rights Calendar in English and Spanish for people in immigration detention. Since its launch last year, this resource has proven to be an invaluable tool to help detained individuals and advocates understand legal rights and document health care needs and rights violations inside immigration jails.

We Support the Workforce Enhancement Grant

In this budget process, we also ask the Council to continue defending vital city services and investments from budget cuts and flatlining. With the Council's forecast of FY23 and FY24 revenue totaling \$5.2 billion more than Office of Management and Budget predictions, and Independent Budget Office's announcement of a \$4.9 billion surplus this year, now is not the time to retreat from our city's sustainability and equity goals. We also stand in partnership with the legal services community in full support of a Workforce Enhancement Initiative Grant that would build in reasonable funding increases each year to cover salary adjustments, inflation, labor contracts and contracting delays.

Conclusion

Chair Schulman, Chair Lee, and to the members of the committees thank you for your time. I look forward to continuing our fruitful collaboration with the council to facilitate healthcare access for new arrivals and long-time New Yorkers alike.

Karina Albistegui Adler
Senior Health Advocate, Health Justice Program
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
151 West 30th Street, 11th floor
New York, NY 10001
Kalbisteguiadler@nylpi.org

NYLPI has fought for more than 40 years to protect civil rights and achieve lived equality for communities in need. Led by community priorities, we pursue health, immigrant, disability, and environmental justice. NYLPI combines the power of law, organizing, and the private bar to make lasting change where it's needed most.

NYLPI's Health Justice Program brings a racial equity and immigrant justice focus to health care advocacy, including ongoing work addressing the human rights crisis in immigration detention and advocating for healthcare for all New Yorkers.