

For Immediate Release

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NYS Department of Health, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and the New York Immigration Coalition Announce Improved Language Access for Limited English Proficient New Yorkers Using the Health Plan Marketplace

Recent Changes to the Health Plan Marketplace and Commitment to Working with Advocates Will Improve Access to Health Insurance for Thousands of Limited English Proficient New Yorkers

Albany, NY, July 17, 2014 – The New York State Department of Health, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), a leading civil rights advocate for marginalized New Yorkers, and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) reaffirmed the State’s ongoing commitment to improving language access and immigrant inclusion on NY State of Health, New York’s Health Exchange.

Building on the success of the Health Plan Marketplace’s first enrollment period, New York State plans to work in collaboration with NYLPI, the NYIC, and other immigrant health advocates to identify and resolve potential language barriers in accessing the Marketplace for thousands of limited English proficient (LEP) and immigrant New Yorkers.

“We appreciate the collaboration with the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest and the New York Immigration Coalition. Working together we have made a series of improvements to help ensure that LEP New Yorkers can easily access affordable, comprehensive health insurance through NY State of Health. We look forward to our continued collaboration as we move into the next open enrollment period,” said Donna Frescatore, Executive Director of NY State of Health.

Among the changes the State has made since it opened on October 1, 2013, are:

- Improved accessibility of translated materials on the Marketplace website;
- Increased capacity of representatives in the customer assistance Help Line to better assist LEP consumers in multiple languages;
- Translated print versions of the application in multiple languages; and
- Assistance for LEP consumers who may have encountered language access barriers during the first enrollment period to complete the enrollment process.

A Spanish version of the website and online application will be available for the next enrollment period, which begins on November 15, 2014. NY State of Health is also in the process of

translating notices into Spanish and additional languages. It will continue to work closely with immigrant health advocates and community-based organizations to reach immigrant and LEP communities, and identify and remedy any remaining access barriers so that all New Yorkers, regardless of language, have access to health insurance.

“We are encouraged by the real commitments that the State has made in response to the serious language access challenges of the first enrollment period,” said Shena Elrington, Director of the Health Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. “Providing immigrants and LEP New Yorkers access to health insurance is not only fair, but also fiscally responsible. Enrolling LEP New Yorkers in health insurance will improve their access to healthcare, and will help reduce the cost of healthcare for everyone. We look forward to partnering with the State to continue finding solutions to improve access for LEP New Yorkers and closely monitor the results.”

During the first enrollment period, over 900,000 New Yorkers enrolled in health insurance through the Marketplace—a tremendous victory. Many LEP and immigrant New Yorkers, however, still lack coverage. Prior to the launch of the first enrollment period, the Urban Institute estimated that 36 percent of potential enrollees would be LEP by the end of 2016. According to recent data released by the New York State Department of Health, 15 percent of enrollees during the first enrollment period self-reported that they prefer to speak a language other than English, which suggests that more needs to be done to make the Marketplace accessible to LEP New Yorkers.

“The New York Immigration Coalition is pleased that the State has provided important racial, ethnic, and preferred language information in its report on 2013-2014 Open Enrollment,” said Steven Choi, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). “Our work with New York's immigrant communities, however, shows that much work remains to ensure that immigrants can access the health care they need. We look forward to working with our members, allies, and the State to support an even more successful 2014-2015 open enrollment period.”

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.

About the New York Immigration Coalition

The New York Immigration Coalition is an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for nearly 200 groups in New York State that work with immigrants and refugees. The NYIC aims to achieve a fairer and more just society that values the contributions of immigrants and extends opportunity to all by promoting immigrants' full civic participation, fostering their leadership,

and providing a unified voice and a vehicle for collective action for New York's diverse immigrant communities.

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