

April 17, 2020

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a public health and economic crisis in New York. Low-wage and immigrant workers are among the most vulnerable, particularly immigrants without an authorized federal immigration status. New York is home to nearly three-quarters of a million undocumented immigrants. About 1 in 12 U.S. citizen children in New York live with at least one undocumented family member. Undocumented workers pay an estimated \$1 billion annually in state and local taxes in New York,¹ and yet they are currently left out of federal and state relief programs.

Immigrants are disproportionately likely to work in the sectors that have been hardest hit by coronavirus-related closures. Yet immigrants without federal immigration status - including those with US citizen family members - are largely excluded from the programs that are supposed to help workers who have lost their jobs or have had their work hours cut. This includes the federal stimulus payments, state unemployment benefits, federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) and most temporary leave and disability payments.

These exclusions no doubt reflect Donald Trump's racism and incompetence, but they are also symptomatic of an ongoing failure of the federal government. For over two decades, Congress has deprived equal rights to an entire generation of immigrants.

That's why state and local governments -- and all of us -- must step up and protect our communities, our economy, and our values. That means ensuring that **ALL immigrants have access to vital relief in this crisis**, especially the most vulnerable.

The coronavirus pandemic is bringing the dangerous hypocrisy of trumpism into full focus: The crisis makes clear that undocumented workers - including day laborers, janitors, restaurant workers, healthcare staff, domestic workers, farmworkers, factory and construction workers - are all essential workers.

¹ <https://itep.org/immigration/>

In order to address our current economic crisis and effectively spur demand in our local communities, it is critical that New York provide safety net support to all individuals, regardless of federal immigration status. Thousands of immigrants across NY have lost their jobs and have no income to rely on or income support. Still, tens of thousands more continue to work in frontline work without access to health care or income support, although they are doing the very work that allows many New Yorkers to stay safe at home.

The following are options for New York to support undocumented immigrants and their families, and others excluded from traditional relief programs.

- **Create a Temporary Wage Replacement Program for workers excluded from unemployment insurance:** this fund should provide income replacement for individuals who have lost wages due to COVID-19 but are excluded from unemployment insurance using a fund of state dollars, or unrestricted federal funds.
- **Allocate funds to community based organizations/ partner organizations** within NY to distribute food, service and other supports for workers and families
- **Provide immediate cash relief for those affected by the pandemic** through organizations/ trusted partners. This emergency funding, like stimulus funding, should be available quickly, in order to allow community members to stay inside and protect their health and that of their families and communities.

In this crisis, there is no ‘them.’ There is only us. For everyone’s safety, for our health, for our economy, and for our security, all immigrants must get access to live-saving assistance. No exceptions.

The top-down failure of the US government must be met with bottom up solutions. We must take care of ourselves in New York, and in so doing, we must set the standard for the country, ensuring that ALL immigrant workers have access to unemployment insurance, as well as emergency food, necessary protective gear, and all testing, treatment, and relief funds.

We thank you for your long-term commitment to enhancing the well-being of all residents of New York, regardless of immigration status, and look forward to working with you to develop this critical relief program.

Regards,

(see two pages of signers below)

National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)

Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights

New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE)

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER (CRC)

LAUNDRY WORKERS CENTER (LWC)

United Community Center of Westchester, Inc. (UCCW)

Workplace Project

WORKERS JUSTICE PROJECT (WJP)

La Colmena

Neighbors Link

Obreros Unidos de Yonkers

New York Nail Salon Workers Association (NYNSWA)

NY NJ Regional Joint Board, Workers United, SEIU

El Centro del Inmigrante

SEPA Mujer Inc.

The Labor Institute

New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH)

OLA of Eastern Long Island

ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York

DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving

Freeport Workers Justice Center

Centro Corazon de Maria - Educational and Advocacy for Latino Immigrants

Long Island Jobs with Justice

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork

Town of Southampton Anti-Bias Task Force

East End YIMBY

Worker Justice Center of New York

L.I.Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives

L.I.Teachers for Human Rights

Long Island Immigrant Alliance

Neighbors in Support of Immigrants

Latino Justice PRLDEF

National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)

Long Island Language Advocates Coalition

Oxfam America

New York Civil Liberties Union

Jews for Racial & Economic Justice

Empire Justice Center

Peace Action New York State

Jobs With Justice

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Tompkins County Worker Center

The Interfaith Alliance of Long Island

African Communities Together

Bethany Congregational UCC

New York Communities for Change
(NYCC)

National Employment Law Project
(NELP)

Leadership Team of the Sisters of St.
Dominic, Amityville

Jobs to Move America

Mara Bard, Scientist

Cc: *Honorable New York State Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie*
Honorable New York State Senate President Andrea Stewart-Cousins