



## REAL SOLUTIONS FOR NEW YORK: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

### Ensure Immigrants' Access to Health Care: Preserve the Safety Net & Uphold the Law *A Blueprint for Justice & Opportunity for Immigrant New Yorkers*

Access to health care is a critical issue for all New Yorkers. It is also a major issue for immigrant communities as they are much less likely to work in jobs that provide health insurance benefits. Noncitizens throughout the country are three times more likely than citizens to lack insurance and are less likely to seek medical care. Immigrant communities lack clear information about their rights to health care and are either barred from or afraid to use government insurance programs.

#### *The Need for Action:*

In order to ensure that the health needs of the most vulnerable in our populations are met, the city must continue to invest in our health care infrastructure. By working toward preserving the health care safety net, the city will continue to provide uninsured New Yorkers with the preventative, primary and specialty care services needed to stay healthy.

With so many changes taking place in our health care system from delivery to how it will be funded, there is an urgent need to preserve funding for the Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), as more and more New Yorkers who lack insurance due to unemployment or inability to access health services will continue to seek services from HHC and other community funded health care resource centers. The city must also work to preserve hospitals in underserved areas; closing such hospitals only exacerbates health conditions and ultimately adds to the growing cost of providing health services to New Yorkers.

#### THE FACTS ON IMMIGRANT HEALTH CARE

- ✓ Despite near universal eligibility for Child Health Plus, non-citizen children living with noncitizen parents are still more than twice as likely as citizen children to be uninsured.<sup>iv</sup>
- ✓ Among low-income New Yorkers younger than 65, the foreign-born are less likely to have Medicaid than the U.S.-born (29% vs. 42%).<sup>v</sup>
- ✓ Foreign-born adults in New York City under age 65 are less likely to have a regular primary care provider than U.S.-born adults (69% vs. 80%), and foreign-born adults who speak Spanish are less likely to have a regular primary care provider than those who speak English (52% vs. 74%).<sup>v</sup>

## Real Solutions for New York City:

### Detailed Recommendations:

Safeguard New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) funding and other critical health funding in the budget.

- **Maintain HHC's Unrestricted Operating Subsidy at \$ 3 Million.** HHC is the healthcare lifeline and safety-net for 1.3 million New Yorkers and serves nearly half a million uninsured patients. HHC already has a budget deficit of \$1.2 billion and has closed five child health clinics and dental clinics, laid off workers, and contracted-out their services. Our public hospital system cannot afford to take any more cuts, especially since it is the city's primary hospital provider for uninsured and Medicaid patients.<sup>i</sup>
- **Restore \$5 Million in funds for Children Health Clinics.** Child Health Clinics have been providing primary care and immunizations for all children for over a century. There were 48 Child Health Clinics in 1988. Today, there are only 19, as 5 were closed last year (3 in Brooklyn) because of the cuts to HHC's budget. We cannot afford to lose this vital source of local primary care for children, including children with asthma.<sup>ii</sup>
- **Maintain the \$2.5 Million in Funding for the Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative.** The Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative has been funded by the City Council every year. Last year, \$3 million was cut from the Preliminary Budget but only \$2.5 million was restored. Each year, funding for this initiative decreases by half a million dollars. We need the full restoration to ensure that pregnant mothers carry to term in good health so that infants are born healthy.<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> The Council's Response to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2011 In fulfillment of City Charter section 247(b) April 8, 2010. Committee on Health, pages 45-49.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.* Committee on Health, pages 45-49.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.* Committee on Health, pages 45-49.

<sup>iv</sup> Urban Institute/RWJF "Uninsured Children" Chart book, August 2010.

<sup>v</sup> The Health of Immigrant in New York City. A Report from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, June 2006.