



Respect and Dignity for All:

Make the Road New York's 2022-23 State Policy Platform

As the largest community-based membership organization representing immigrants and working-class people of color in New York State, with 25,000 members, Make the Road New York (MRNY) is uniquely positioned to identify and address pressing community needs. Through its network of community centers in New York City, Long Island and Westchester, MRNY employs a multi-faceted approach to supporting immigrant, communities of color, and working-class New Yorkers, providing a full range of legal, educational and survival services. The communities we represent and serve have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and our 2022-23 state policy platform centers on smart solutions to mitigate the coronavirus's impact while working to address underlying inequalities and improve the lives of immigrant, Black, and brown families across New York State. Below, we offer concrete policies that, if passed and enacted, would help ensure that all New Yorkers are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. We urge the Legislature and Governor Hochul to enact the following:

(Note: ➤ indicates budget-focused items.)

PROTECT IMMIGRANT NEW YORKERS

➤ **Fund Excluded Workers & Excluded No More** (Ramos S8165 | Reyes A9037): After the creation of a first-in-the-nation \$2.1 billion fund that reached more than 131,000 workers excluded from unemployment and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the state legislature and Governor must now add \$3 billion in additional funds to the Excluded Worker Fund to meet the needs of those who were eligible but unable to access the original round of funding. Per the Immigration Research Initiative, this additional investment will allow a further 295,000 excluded workers to receive funding. We also urge passage of S8165/A9037, a bill to establish a permanent unemployment insurance program in New York State that can be accessed by excluded workers who currently contribute to social safety net programs, but are excluded from unemployment insurance.

➤ **Ensure Immigrant Healthcare Access (Coverage4All)** (Rivera S1572A | Gottfried A880A) **and pass the New York Health Act** (Rivera S5474 | Gottfried A6058) **as a comprehensive solution:** Through S1572A/A880A, the state should create a state-funded Essential Plan for all New Yorkers with income up to 200% of the federal poverty level, regardless of their immigration status. This would immediately provide coverage to immigrants not eligible for insurance due to their immigration status. It would also help continue moving towards implementing the New York Health Act, a comprehensive solution to make health care affordable to all, regardless of immigration status. The New York Health Act would guarantee comprehensive health coverage to everyone, regardless of immigration status, providing everyone with affordable, quality healthcare including vision, dental, hearing, reproductive health, substance use treatment, mental health and long-term care and support services, while removing financial barriers to healthcare. The New York State Legislature should also include language in S1411A/A0307A to ensure that the **expansion of the Medicaid for Pregnant Women program to 12 months covers all individuals currently eligible for the program, including immigrant women.**

KEEP NEW YORKERS IN THEIR HOMES

■ Pass “Good Cause” eviction legislation to bring renters’ rights to tenants in smaller buildings

(Salazar S3082 | Hunter A5573): With the pandemic eviction moratorium expiring on January 15th, millions of tenants will have virtually no protections against horrific housing conditions, unfair eviction, and harassment. Approximately 5 million tenants in small homes have no protections against unjust evictions. As large corporate landlords buy up smaller buildings, tenants face escalating rents and displacement. It is imperative that we bring rent relief to tenants in smaller buildings. Good cause eviction legislation would enable tenants to fight unjust evictions and limit rent increases.

➤ Create a Housing Access Voucher Program to help tenants stay in their units and fight

homelessness and displacement (S2804B Kavanagh | A3701A Cymbrowitz): New York’s homelessness and affordability crisis continues to grow. The number of homeless individuals and families, now 92,000, will grow now that the eviction moratorium has lapsed, if urgent measures are not taken. The proposed program would allocate \$1 billion for Housing Access Vouchers, setting aside 50% of the vouchers created for households at risk of homelessness and 50% for homeless individuals and families. Voucher recipients would contribute a maximum of 30% of their monthly adjusted income towards rent and the rest would be covered by the voucher. It would also be accessible to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, a first in the state.

ADVANCE JUSTICE and STRENGTHEN CIVIL RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

■ Pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act (Jackson S7198 | Nolan A5197): This bill would end harsh and ineffective school disciplinary practices that disproportionately impact youth of color and students with disabilities. New York’s antiquated, racially biased school discipline policies are pushing marginalized students out of school and into the criminal legal system. Black students in New York are more than four times as likely to be suspended from school than their white counterparts. Resulting in the loss of critical instructional time and ultimately leading towards dropping out. This bill would ensure that school districts implement codes of conduct that limit the use of suspensions as a disciplinary response to minor infractions, reduce loss of instructional time, and encourage the use of restorative practices and positive alternatives to suspensions.

■ Stop Violence in the Sex Trades Act (SVSTA) (Salazar S3075 | Gottfried A849): People who trade sex or who identify as sex workers, whether as a form of survival or as a choice, have historically been harassed and criminalized by the police. Those most impacted are Black and brown, undocumented transgender women because of a criminal record that continues to bar them from access to opportunities and can potentially result in deportation. This legislation will amend NY Penal Law article 230 for consenting adults who trade sex for resources and/or money. It will decriminalize collaborating with peers and patronizing adult sex workers, while upholding all anti-trafficking statutes that protect survivors and minors from exploitation and coercion.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES SUPPORTED THIS YEAR:

➤ Expanding Access to Child Care: Now is the time for New York to commit to creating a high-quality, culturally responsive, universal child care system within four years. This year, New York must take large steps toward achieving universal child care. We must expand access to subsidies for child care and school-age child care for lower-income New York families regardless of employment or immigration status or any other factor, raise child care workforce compensation, and increase provider reimbursement rates.

➤ **Make the promise of a \$15 minimum wage real by passing the EmPIRE Worker Protection Act to help enforce wage theft and equal pay laws** (S12 Hoylman | A5876 Joyner): The EmPIRE Worker Protection Act extends the New York State Department of Labor's (NYSDOL) reach by allowing workers and advocates to step in and represent the public. This bill would generate approximately \$60 million in revenue for the underfunded NYSDOL through accrued penalties on bad actors. Additionally, corporations' use of forced arbitration agreements is compelling workers to waive their right to be heard by a judge and jury if their employer illegally exploits them. New York State cannot ban forced arbitration agreements. But we *can* improve the public's ability to hold law-breakers accountable by passing EmPIRE.

➤ **Invest \$23.4 million in NYSED Funding for Adult Literacy Education (ALE):** The state should maintain last year's \$7.8 million investment and increase ALE by \$15.6 million this year. More than 3.9 million adults in New York, many on the frontlines of the pandemic, lack English language proficiency, basic literacy and numeracy skills, or a high school diploma. Adult literacy education is essential to a fair, sustainable recovery. ALE is one of the few state funding streams able to address the need for flexible adult education services by supporting community-based English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE) and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation programs. Expanding ALE would increase per-student funding in Adult Literacy Education through strategic investments in resources, services, and supports, such as technology, counseling/case management. This will lead to greater outcomes and a wider range of impacts for adult literacy students, their families, and their communities. We also call for the creation of a sub committee on adult literacy within the Assembly and Senate Education committees and an increase of investment to \$46.8m in FY 24 to serve more students at an increased rate per student.

➤ **Increase funding for the Community Health Advocates Program to \$5.1 million and increase Navigator funding to \$32 million:** The Community Health Advocates Program (CHA) provides one-on-one assistance to individuals across the state, helping individuals navigate the complex health system. CHA advocates troubleshoot the problems that individuals face post-enrollment and help individuals who are not eligible for insurance access low cost care and hospital financial assistance. CHA saves tax dollars — without the program individuals end up in expensive emergency room treatments. Funding should also be increased for the Navigators program, which provides one-on-one assistance helping individuals enroll in any form of health insurance through the Marketplace. The state should also create a \$5 million grant program to fund community-based organizations to conduct outreach in communities with high rates of uninsured individuals.

■ **Pass the Patient Medical Debt Protection Act** (Rivera S6522 | Gottfried A7363 & Rivera S2521B | Gottfried A3470B): Pass A7363|S6522 so healthcare providers are no longer allowed to place liens on patients' homes or garnish their wages. Pass A3470B|S2521B, which would require providers to notify patients ahead of time if the provider adds facility fees to bills. This bill also prohibits providers from charging facility fees that insurers will not pay. Also, New York should enact legislation (Gottfried A8441) that ensures patients who are eligible for hospital financial assistance under Section 2807-k of the public health law, but do not find out or are not able to complete the application, are not sued in New York State.