



TO: New York State Assembly Health Committee Members

March 5, 2019

Re: Support for A.3316/S.1809

Dear Health Committee Members,

We write to express our appreciation for your leadership and commitment to ensuring equitable health among New Yorkers, and in that vein, ask for your support for A.3316/S.1809.

Treatment Action Group (TAG) is a New York based, independent, activist and community-based research and policy think tank dedicated to ending HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and hepatitis C virus (HCV). We staunchly support A.3316, which would ensure that those with Temporary Protected Status are eligible for Medicaid, even if the federal government ends the program.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for people from countries experiencing humanitarian crises is under siege. Many of the estimated 325,000 TPS holders in the U.S., including 33,600 New Yorkers, have lived and worked in their communities for decades. Because of the Affordable Care Act, TPS holders are eligible to enroll in qualified health plans and receive tax credits and subsidies through New York State of Health. Low-income TPS holders are eligible for the Essential Plan if they meet the income guideline, because of the state's commitment to covering immigrant communities excluded from federal Medicaid. Many TPS holders have employer-sponsored insurance due to the work authorizations they have as a result of their immigration status. Yet the Trump Administration is aggressively moving to end TPS, and has already announced the end of TPS for several countries (e.g., Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), and many more are pending (Sudan, Nicaragua, Haiti, El Salvador, Nepal, and Honduras). New Yorkers with TPS currently stand to lose these health benefits.

The consequences of losing coverage are dire for the individuals and their families, as well as the economy of New York and our progress against communicable diseases such as TB, HIV, and HCV. People without coverage are more likely to delay or avoid seeking preventive care or treatment. Hospitals provide care, for which they may not be reimbursed. New York has committed to ending the HIV and HCV epidemics, and is battling a rising TB epidemic. We know that proactive prevention, early detection, and comprehensive treatment are essential to ending these epidemics, and progress will be threatened if those vulnerable lack coverage.

Just as New York wisely passed the Reproductive Health Act in case Roe v. Wade is reversed, so should we make sure that health care is protected for all. New York can continue to set an example for the rest of the country in resisting the federal government's threatening policies.

TAG requests your supports for A.3316. Please do not hesitate to contact me at erica.lessem@treatmentactiongroup.org or 212.253.7922.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erica Lessem". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erica Lessem, MPH

Deputy Executive Director – Programs