



TO: New York State Assembly Health Committee Members

March 5, 2019

Re: Support for A.5974/S.3900

Dear Health Committee Members,

We thank you for your leadership, and ask you to support A.5974/S.3900, to expand eligibility for the Essential Plan to individuals who are not currently eligible due to their immigration status. Treatment Action Group (TAG) strongly supports A.5974/S.3900.

TAG is an independent, activist and community-based research and policy think tank located in New York. We take a human rights- and evidence-based approach to fight for better treatment, prevention, a vaccine, and a cure for HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and hepatitis C virus (HCV). We have been distressed by the persistent attacks against, and the poor health care coverage for, immigrants, which threatens their rights as well as progress against the three communicable diseases TAG is working to end.

This bill provides adult immigrants with access to health insurance coverage equivalent to the coverage offered to their citizen counterparts who are eligible for the Essential Plan. This builds on New York's success covering children (including immigrant children) through the Child Health Plus program. By extending coverage to eligible adult immigrants, this bill ensures that all New Yorkers have access to affordable health coverage, and prevents young immigrants from falling off the health insurance cliff when they turn 19, after years of state investment in their health.

Exclusions due to immigration status have left out many immigrant New Yorkers from benefitting from new coverage options or public coverage through the New York State of Health Marketplace. People without coverage are more likely to delay seeking preventive care, avoid seeking care for fear of costs, and are at higher risk of incurring medical debt or bankruptcy. We know that proactive prevention, early detection, and comprehensive treatment are essential to upholding New York's commitments to ending the HIV and HCV epidemics and to ending TB, which is on the rise in New York.

Only if everyone has access to quality, affordable care will New York control costs, improve health outcomes, and end these epidemics. New York has the opportunity to further cement its leadership nationally by making a firm commitment to supporting the health and rights of all New Yorkers.

We strongly support A.5974/S.3900, and look forward to you doing the same. Please contact me at erica.lessem@treatmentactiongroup.org or 212.253.7922.

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

Erica Lessem, MPH

Deputy Executive Director – Programs