

October 16, 2019

Dear Representatives,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to show our strong support for The Health Equity & Access under the Law (HEAL) for Immigrant Women & Families Act of 2019, in line with our pursuit of securing comprehensive and affordable access to healthcare for people of all immigration statuses so that immigrant families can live with health and dignity. The HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act of 2019 accomplishes this by removing legal and policy barriers to health insurance coverage and thus expanding access to healthcare services, including sexual, reproductive, and maternal health services, for immigrants.

Under the current law, many immigrants are unable to qualify for Medicaid until five years after receiving green card (LPR) status, and many are ineligible to purchase health insurance from the health insurance marketplaces established by the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As a result, immigrants are forced to navigate a complicated patchwork of care that often leaves them paying out-of-pocket for basic healthcare, particularly if a community health center or employer-sponsored health insurance is not available to them. In light of this reality, many immigrant families must choose between paying for healthcare and purchasing necessities like food and shelter, further hindering their ability to raise healthy families and build strong communities.

These onerous barriers disproportionately harm immigrant women. According to the Guttmacher Institute, one-third of noncitizen immigrant women ages 15-44 are uninsured.¹ For women in that group who are also low-income, that proportion jumps to almost half.² Furthermore, nearly half of immigrant women are of reproductive age.³ Legal and policy barriers to affordable health insurance coverage therefore particularly exacerbate their risk of negative sexual, reproductive, and maternal health outcomes, with lasting health and economic sequences for immigrant women, their families, and society as a whole.

The HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act of 2019 ensures immigrant women and their families can access affordable coverage for which they are otherwise eligible and receive the health care they need. This in turn creates stronger communities by alleviating the burdensome costs of urgent care clinics and emergency rooms as primary care facilities. To accomplish this, the bill: 1) restores enrollment to full-benefit Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to all federally authorized immigrants who are otherwise eligible; 2) removes the unjustifiable exclusion of undocumented immigrants from accessing health insurance coverage on the ACA's health insurance marketplaces; 3) ensures access to public and affordable

¹ *Immigrant women need health coverage, not legal barriers*, GUTTMACHER INST. (Dec. 4, 2018), <https://www.guttmacher.org/infographic/2018/immigrant-women-need-health-coverage-not-legal-barriers-0> [<https://perma.cc/X3XA-M9KE>].

² *See id.* "Low-income women are those in families with incomes under the federal poverty level (\$20,420 for a family of three in 2017)." *Id.* Data includes some information on undocumented immigrants, although that information is generally acknowledged to be a considerable undercount of that population group.

³ Kinsey Hasstedt et al., *Immigrant Women's Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Coverage and Care in the United States*, COMMONWEALTH FUND (Nov. 20, 2018), <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2018/nov/immigrant-womens-access-sexual-reproductive-health-coverage> [<https://perma.cc/2K6J-SEBJ>].

health coverage for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals; and 4) reinstates Medicaid eligibility for COFA migrants.⁴

From threats to healthcare, nutrition, and affordable housing to separating families at the border and mass deportation, the Trump administration has been relentless in attempting to strip away agency and dignity from immigrant families. In light of these threats and constant attacks, we cannot afford to be lukewarm; we need bold and impactful legislation that expands access to the basic care that immigrant women and their families need and deserve. Health should not depend on immigration status. Every individual deserves to be healthy and to obtain affordable health care with dignity, regardless of how long they have been in the United States or the status they have been granted.

For these reasons, we strongly support the HEAL for Immigrant Women & Families Act of 2019, and we invite you to join us in this effort. To cosponsor, contact Stephanie Kang with Rep. Pramila Jayapal at stephanie.kang@mail.house.gov or Linda Antinone with Rep. Deb Haaland at linda.antinone@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
African Services Committee
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AIDS United
American Public Health Association
Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
ASU (APIDA Sisterhood Uprising)
Athlete Ally
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC)
California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
Casa San Jose
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Reproductive Rights
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers

⁴ COFA migrants are citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau, who were inadvertently barred from the Medicaid program by the 1996 welfare law. The Compact of Free Association (COFA), an international agreement between the US and these three Pacific Islands, originally allowed their citizens to receive federally funded healthcare coverage.

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Coalition on Human Needs
COFA-CLAN
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Colorado Organizations and Individuals Responding to HIV/AIDS (CORA)
Daily Kos
DC-MD Justice For Our Neighbors
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
End Rape on Campus
Equality California
Equality North Carolina
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
Families USA
First Focus Campaign for Children
Forward Together
Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition
Guttmacher Institute
Healthy Teen Network
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic Health Network
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Indivisible
Irish International Immigrant Center
Justice in Aging
Keshet
Lanai Community Health Center
Latino Commission on AIDS
Legal Voice
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Medical Students for Choice
MomsRising
NAACP
NARAL Pro-Choice America
NASTAD
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Independent Living

National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)
National Education Association
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Human Services Assembly
National Immigration Law Center
National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH)
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Survivor Network
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New York Immigration Coalition
Northwest Health Law Advocates
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Oklahoma Micronesian Coalition
People For the American Way
PFLAG National
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of American
Positive Women's Network-USA
Power to Decide
Prevention Institute
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
Reconstructing Judaism
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
RESULTS
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Silver State Equality-Nevada
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice center
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern Poverty Law Center
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Children's Partnership
The National Equality Action Team
Thrive Alabama
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus
Union for Reform Judaism
United We Dream

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Welcome Project Inc.,
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Foundation of California
Young Invincibles
YWCA