

Hearing: Workforce Development

January 31st, 2022

Lucas Sanchez, New York Communities for Change

Good afternoon, my name is Lucas Sanchez, and I am the Deputy Director of New York Communities for Change. I am here to testify in support of 1) an additional \$3 billion for the existing Excluded Worker Fund and 2) the first ever permanent unemployment benefits program for excluded workers in our state.

I am here on behalf of NYCC's 20,000 members across New York City and Long Island waiting on the New York state legislature to act once again.

We have lost far too many people who did not have the choice to stay home in a pandemic. Without protections like unemployment insurance or access to healthcare - thousands of our Black and brown and immigrant members were forced to go out to get work, and get sick. Our people were hailed as heroes but sacrificed in a crisis.

New York state intervened by passing the Excluded Workers Fund. And thousands of families received the relief they desperately needed. But it is not enough. The fund was exhausted in just nine weeks. Additionally, due to application barriers, a lack of time to prepare, and geographic inequities, thousands were unable to access it. **In fact, according to New York's Department of Labor's own data, over 75,000 eligible people who applied in the last week, were denied due to lack of funds.**

NYCC helped more than 3000 people apply for the fund and saw first-hand both the tears from people's eyes when they were approved but also from those who were denied due to these lack of funds.

By replenishing the Excluded Workers Fund with an additional \$3 billion dollars, you are investing in the recovery of over 100,000 more hard working New Yorkers.

Additionally, New York state legislators must pass a permanent alternative to unemployment insurance by passing the "Excluded No More" legislation (S8165/A9037), which is sponsored by Sen. Jessica Ramos and Assemblymember Karines Reyes and awaiting a bill number.

Excluded workers pay taxes, pay into the social benefits programs that benefit you, me and so many others - but are still excluded from receiving the life saving support they need. This program would create that economic safety net that almost all other workers in the state are entitled and make it so we won't need another excluded worker fund in the future.

The Excluded Worker Unemployment Program has received overwhelming support by the Black, Puerto Rican and Hispanic Caucus and was included in this year's "People's Budget."

The Assembly, Senate and Governor must not hesitate here. You must act on behalf of New Yorkers who are still awaiting COVID relief and a true safety net for excluded workers in the long run. **To summarize, I submit this testimony in support of \$3 billion more for the Excluded Workers Fund and the Excluded No More legislation. Thank you for your time.**