

**Written Testimony from Housing Works**  
**NYS Senate Health Committee & NYS Assembly Health Committee**  
**Joint Hearing on the New York Health Act**  
**October 23, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to the New York State Assembly Committee on Health and the Senate Committee on Health about the New York Health Act. My name is Reed Vreeland, and I am the Director of New York City Community Mobilization at Housing Works, a healing community of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Founded in 1990, we are the largest community-based HIV service organization in the United States and provide a range of integrated services for low-income New Yorkers with HIV/AIDS – from housing, to medical and behavioral care, to job training. Our mission is to end the dual crises of homelessness and AIDS through relentless advocacy, the provision of life saving services, and entrepreneurial businesses that sustain our efforts. Housing Works strongly supports the New York Health Act and its ability to address the overlapping epidemics of HIV and hepatitis C, and to provide coverage to low-income immigrant New Yorkers.

More than 400,000 New Yorkers cannot enroll in health insurance because of their immigration status. For these vulnerable populations, the New York Health Act, would ensure access to basic preventive healthcare in order to preserve health and reduce reliance on avoidable emergency and inpatient care. Not only would comprehensive coverage underscore New York's commitment to immigrants, but it would also support the vital economic engine of health care by limiting providers' and payers' exposure to uncompensated care costs.

Housing Works is part of the End AIDS NY 2020 Community Coalition, a group of over 90 health care centers, hospitals, and community-based organizations across the State that are fully committed to realizing the goals of our historic New York State plan to end our HIV/AIDS epidemic by the year 2020. The ETE Blueprint supports an expansion of HIV testing and treatment and greater access to PrEP and nPEP for new immigrant populations. Crucial to these expansions is the ability for immigrants to access medical care, and the lack of health insurance is a difficult, and sometimes impossible, barrier to health services. Providing comprehensive coverage to this population will increase the number of immigrants using PrEP/nPEP and accessing HIV treatment. Furthermore, the New York Health Act will also enhance the state's ability to eliminate hepatitis C by expanding access to testing, linkage, treatment, and prevention programs statewide.

We also want to underscore the benefit to people who presently must use AIDS Drug Assistance Program or the PrEP Assistance Program because their co-pays and deductibles are too high for their medications. Under the New York Health Act, direct negotiation with pharmaceutical companies and will reduce the cost of drugs and eliminate co-pays and deductibles.

Housing Works, along with organizations, individuals and communities across the State, ask for the Legislature's support to fully implement the ETE Blueprint by supporting the New York Health Act. Together, we can push the AIDS epidemic beyond the tipping point and provide comprehensive, universal care for every New Yorker.

Sincerely,

Reed Vreeland

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