



MEKONG

Testimony of Khamarin Nhann Campaign Director, Mekong NYC

My name is Khamarin Nhann, I am the Campaign Director of Mekong NYC. Mekong NYC serves and organizes the Southeast Asian community in the Bronx and throughout NYC by achieving equity through community organizing and healing, promoting arts, culture, language, and creating a safety net by improving access to essential social services. The Southeast Asian community in the Bronx primarily consists of Cambodian and Vietnamese.

We are here today to hear the voices of community members, leaders. Community-based organization and healthcare providers that have been on the ground and providing much needed health care services and advocating on behalf of vulnerable communities. Our work has always had a Health Justice approach, we understand that our overall wellbeing is vital to addressing systemic change. Community-based organizations like Mekong NYC are on the front lines and see the direct impact of a healthcare system that just doesn't work. We want to address root causes and understanding the importance of social and economic issues impacting our overall health. We understand that with a Social Determinants of Health lens, we can see how these systems are interconnected and affect us all. Being poor should determine the kind of health care services afforded to you. Being an immigrant, refugee or undocumented should not excluded your ability to access quality health care service. Being communities of color should not continue to be impacted by failed policies and systems. We need to uplift all voices and narratives of our communities and break these cycles.

The Bronx is still the unhealthiest county in all 62 counties in NYS and as a national it seems that this is a major topic of discussion. The Affordable Care Act showed us that our health care is a priority and should include everyone. This current Administration has told us the opposite and has tried to sabotage health care from every direction. We need NYS to be the leadership for this nation. Through the New York Health Act, we believe this is a big step moving in that direction. We already spend more than any other country in the world, but we still have people across the spectrum that can't afford, access or navigate such a system. We need the support from elected officials to continue in supporting the New York Health Act and to provide resources for organizations on the ground. We are the community's safety net and we are playing a role in building community power.

This bill is the first step in the right direction, and it will continue to push a local and national narrative about health care. We need to continue work together and build collective power if we want to see change. We understand the importance of common struggle, common purpose and collective healing.

No one should have to carry the burden of seeking their health care needs alone. We believe Health care is a Human Right and that Health is for everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity for us to share our voices and experiences.