

New York Health Act Testimony, October 23, 2019  
Sandra Lobo, Executive Director  
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC)

Good afternoon. My name is Sandra Lobo, executive director of the NWBCCC, a 45 year old member led grassroots organization that fights for racial and economic justice. I also served on our board of directors and was a leader within our health justice committee for many years.

I was one of the core leaders that organized a campaign that saved the labor and delivery ward from closing at our local public hospital North Central Bronx where I gave birth to my son. I helped implement a community health planning process in our neighborhood alongside our partners at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and have examined the community health needs assessments (CHNA) of our local private hospitals to help our residents understand if resources are being distributed in alignment with or misdirected away from the real needs of our community.

As an organization we have been organizing to improve the lives of our community members, addressing the root causes of stark health disparities through a social determinants of health lens, meaning we know that it is not simply the choices we make-- how we eat and how often we exercise-- that determines our health, but rather the quality of housing we live in, whether or not we earn a living wage, availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and of course access to quality healthcare, among other significant factors.

I have lived, worked and worshipped in the Bronx for the last 26 years and raise my two children, Tiago and amelia here in this borough. I am here to testify in support of the New York Health Act which would greatly improve the quality of life for most of our community members. Countless residents have shared stories about having to choose between medicine and rent, delaying surgery as not to burden their family with debt, or suffering through pain until they are able to save money for medicine.

These are not only unfair choices, they are false choices, that our people should not be forced to make. We believe that it's not a question of not having the resources to provide universal healthcare but whether or not we have the will and the courage to make this a priority. Our current healthcare system is broken, set up to create wealth for pharmaceuticals and healthcare systems, reliant on our sickness to function instead of working to keep us healthy. For a borough that is number 62 out of 62 counties in the state with the worst health outcomes, the New York Health Act can literally be the difference between life and death for our community members.

For our champions of the New York Health Act like our Senator Gustavo Rivera, I know you understand the profound impact this legislation would have on our community and I thank you for your leadership. For those of you who walked in here today undecided or against, I implore you to reconsider and take seriously that saying no to the New York Health Act is actually saying no to quality of life to millions of New Yorkers. Thank you.