



**Memorandum in Support
(A.6890/Rivera)**

The Children's Health Fund supports Assembly Bill 6890, as introduced by Assemblyman Peter Rivera, which would establish outreach programs to provide information and educational services to immigrants on the availability of health care services in the state. The bill would require the department of health to contract with community based organizations to inform immigrants on their eligibility for health care services, medical assistance, emergency medical assistance, family health plus (FHP) and the child health insurance plan (CHIP).

Generally, the federal Medicaid program does not require states to insure immigrants in the United States unless they have lawfully resided in the country for five years. However, New York State, with its large immigrant population, has recognized the need to insure immigrants so that they have access to necessary health care. But recent changes in immigration and welfare laws have created a negative effect on immigrant access to existing health care services. Many immigrants are fearful of applying for public health insurance for fear of deportation. Immigrants who are eligible for Medicaid are not applying due to unfounded fears of potential immigration consequences and many immigrants are unaware of their eligibility for emergency Medicaid services.

Nearly half of all immigrants in New York, almost 2 million people, lack health care insurance and therefore do not access preventive or primary care. As a result, immigrants rely on emergency rooms when untreated chronic conditions become serious medical emergencies. This situation can be avoided through access to primary care. Throughout the state, rates of tuberculosis in immigrant communities and outbreaks of preventable diseases such as rubella, should have been avoided through preventive immunizations. The cost of treating these outbreaks is far higher than the preventive primary care visit. Furthermore, the public health of all New Yorkers is jeopardized when such outbreaks occur. This bill would help not only immigrants but also the public health of all New Yorkers by enabling immigrants to access health care. The Children's Health Fund urges you to support Assembly Bill 6890.

The Children's Health Fund (CHF), working with hospitals and health centers throughout the country, has provided comprehensive pediatric care to more than 300,000 medically underserved children since its inception in 1987. By providing a medical home to thousands of children through 17 programs in 13 states and the District of Columbia, CHF recognizes the importance of public health insurance programs to ensure continuity of care, the continuation of a child's access to a medical home.