

Faith Leaders' Sign On Letter

Signers can be clergy, nuns or brothers, congregational leaders, justice advocates or food pantry/outreach staff.

Dear Governor Hochul and members of the New York State Legislature:

We write to you as concerned faith leaders on behalf of thousands of excluded workers - many undocumented, essential workers who were unable to access the 2021 New York State Excluded Workers Fund (EWF) that was depleted in weeks.

We are grateful for the 2021 Excluded Workers Fund that reached over 130,000 New Yorkers across the state, with 99% of recipients receiving the maximum benefit amount. However, over 75,000 excluded New Yorkers were denied due to lack of funds, and tens of thousands of others could not access EWF because they work in the low-wage cash economy and thus were either unaware of the fund or unable to gather in time the necessary documents required to receive EWF assistance due to the fund closing in only 10 weeks.¹

New York knows these workers by their contributions within our communities as farmer workers, housekeepers, day laborers, landscapers, restaurant workers and their participation in many other essential services.

We know these workers by name because, since they were unable to receive federal and state COVID relief funds in 2020 and then unable to access EWF funds in 2021, our congregations' food pantries and outreach centers have fed them and clothed them and provided cash assistance and even toys to their children at the Holidays so their families could eke out an existence during this terrible pandemic. Some are members of our congregations and they are our neighbors.

These excluded, essential workers have done their part to make New York a decent place to live. Our congregations have done our part with charitable support to ease their suffering caused by lost income during the pandemic. We cannot do much more to help them.

Now it is time for New York State to again do its part, and in the words of the great Hebrew Prophet Amos, to "see that justice is done."

For this reason, we urge you to support replenishing the Excluded Workers Fund with \$3 billion in the 2022 New York State budget. Thousands of workers can receive the assistance that they so urgently need, as they have been contributing to our state's economy before and during the pandemic. In doing

¹ New York State Department of Labor. "Excluded Workers Fund," January 2022.

so, the additional EWF funds will pump millions of dollars into our local economies as workers are able to pay their landlords rent arrears, buy food, clothing and other necessities at community businesses.

We also support a permanent solution to the social safety gaps exposed by the COVID Pandemic. We support the passage of the Excluded Worker Unemployment program. This program will cover up to 50,000 excluded workers with much needed survival benefits. This will assist not only undocumented immigrants who lose income, but also many thousands of cash workers across all industries such as domestic workers, day laborers, and agricultural workers, and truly self-employed workers like Street Vendors.

We urge you to support the “Excluded No More” bill (S8165/A9037) that will set up this critical permanent program to provide an economic safety net to these essential but excluded workers. The Excluded Workers Fund was a morally proper and economically sound public policy decision in 2021 and remains so in 2022. Please support the \$3 billion replenishment of this fund in the 2022 NY State budget.

The “Excluded No More” bill will provide a permanent solution for those many hard-working New Yorkers currently denied access to the New York State Unemployment Insurance program. Please sponsor and fight for 8165/A9037.

Respectfully,

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