

# Yonkers Free Press

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"My employer closed down his business weeks ago. He won't return my calls. My daughters ask me what we will do, and it breaks my heart because I cannot tell them I don't know what we will do," said a Yonkers immigrant worker, Jose Antonio, in a media call on Friday organized by the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, in which workers spoke of losing jobs without getting government relief.

## Yonkers Day Laborer Jose Antonio And Others Urging Governor To Provide COVID-19 Relief To Undocumented

By MAXIMILIANO RAMIREZ

Day laborer and other advocacy groups are calling on New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to provide COVID-19 relief funding for undocumented immigrant workers across the state, pointing to California Gov. Gavin Newsom's recent announce-

ment that California will designate \$125 million in relief funds to its undocumented workers.

"It is critical that New York provide safety net support to all individuals, regardless of federal immigration status," wrote the the National Day Laborer Organizing Network in a letter delivered to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office on Friday and signed by some 48 organizations that the group said work closely with day laborers and low wage workers in New York, including a sign-on by the New York Civil Liberties Union.

The letter added, "Thousands of immigrants across NY have lost their jobs and have no income to rely on or income support.

Still, tens of thousands more continue to work in frontline work without access to health care or income support, although they are doing the very work that allows many New Yorkers to stay safe at home."

On Thursday, Andrew Cuomo was asked by media about Newsom's decision to provide \$500 to 150,000 to illegal immigrants in his state that do not receive any assistance under the \$2.2 trillion recent stimulus package approved by President Donald Trump and Congress, according to The New York Post.

"We're looking into it but we have real financial problems," Cuomo said when pressed, the Post reported, adding that he also said, "The federal government should have a more inclusive policy."

For the advocacy groups who signed onto the letter delivered to Cuomo, his answers have not been good enough.

The National Day Laborer network said in one of its news releases Friday that Cuomo, in its view, is "deflecting from questions" on the issue, and said that the media call giving personal accounts and stories was

another way that immigrant workers could talk about "the impact of coronavirus and demand that Governor Cuomo ensure that undocumented workers have access to sick leave, unemployment insurance, necessary protective gear, and all testing, treatment, and relief."

In the letter to Cuomo signed by the dozens of groups, they wrote that "the coronavirus pandemic is bringing the dangerous hypocrisy of trumpism into full focus.

The crisis makes clear that undocumented workers including day laborers, janitors, restaurant workers, healthcare staff, domestic workers, farmworkers, factory and construction workers are all essential workers."

The letter continued, "In order to address our current economic crisis and effectively spur demand in our local communities, it is critical that New York provide safety net support

to all individuals, regardless of federal immigration status," and the groups in the letter said that among various options for relief, New York State could:

Create a "Temporary Wage Replacement Program" for workers excluded from unemployment insurance. "This fund should provide income replacement for individuals who have lost wages due to COVID-19 but are excluded from unemployment insurance using a fund of state dollars, or unrestricted federal funds," said the groups.

Allocate funds to community-based organizations and partner organizations within New York to distribute food, service, and other supports for workers and families

Provide immediate cash relief for those affected by the pandemic through organizations and trusted partners. "This emergency funding,

like stimulus funding, should be available quickly, in order to allow community members to stay," the groups added in the letter.

The network said in a news release that New York State has nearly 750,000 undocumented immigrants, with about 1 in 12 U.S. citizen children in New York living with at least one undocumented family member.

It also claimed that "undocumented workers pay an estimated \$1 billion annually in state and local taxes in New York, and yet they are currently left out of federal and state relief programs" including, according to the letter to Cuomo, federal stimulus payments, state unemployment benefits, federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) and most temporary leave and disability payments.