



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

Senator Rivera and Assembly Member González-Rojas Introduce Legislation to Eliminate the Cost of Asthma Inhalers

GUSTAVO RIVERA September 11, 2024

| ISSUE: **ASTHMA, NEW YORK HEALTH ACT**

“Asthma Alley” Rep Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas and Senate Health Chair and Bronx Senator Gustavo Rivera Introduce Legislation to Eliminate the Cost of Asthma Inhalers



Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas and State Senator Gustavo Rivera have introduced new legislation, [S9906/A10692](#), which would eliminate deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, or any other cost-sharing requirements for asthma inhalers. According to the

New York State Department of Health, in New York alone more than 1.4 million adults have asthma. The issue is prevalent among children as well. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that in 2021, New York State had an estimated 315,000 children with asthma, which was about 8.9% of children in the state.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2022 more than 20 million adults and over 4.5 million children were living with asthma. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has found that asthma kills about 10 people every day, while chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) kills about 390 people every day and is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States. Asthma and COPD also place a strain on our healthcare system. Per the CDC, each year, asthma is responsible for more than 1.7 million emergency department visits and over \$50 billion in healthcare costs.

But these realities have done nothing to reduce the cost of asthma inhalers with the price of each life-saving device being as high as \$640 a month in some instances.

González-Rojas, who sits on the Assembly's Health and Environmental Conservation Committees introduced the legislation because of its significance to her district as well. Astoria in Queens County has been infamously known as "asthma alley" for its high rates of hospitalizations due to the condition. The issue disproportionately impacts young people of color.

Rivera represents the northwest Bronx, where almost every census tract has been designated a disadvantaged community by the Climate Justice Working Group. In January 2023, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) released the Asthma Burden in NYC Report that showed the Bronx had a substantially higher asthma mortality rate than other NYC boroughs as well as the highest pediatric emergency department visit rates among NYC.

Minnesota, Washington, and New Jersey have passed legislation capping the cost of asthma inhalers.

"A KFF poll this year found that 55% of adults are very or somewhat worried about affording their prescription drug costs. Inhalers for asthma are not only life-saving devices but also essential medicines. We must do everything we can to ensure that over one million New Yorkers, including children, who have asthma can access this crucial healthcare tool. As a representative of Astoria, also known as 'Asthma Alley,' I am proud to introduce this bill with Senator Rivera and urge the legislature to pass it and the Governor to sign it into law. It should not be so costly to breathe." **said Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas.**

"Our state must use every tool we have to address the serious asthma crisis that disproportionately affects children in the Bronx and other parts of New York impacted by environmental and economic injustice. I'm proud to introduce legislation with Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas that recognizes how imperative it is to remove the financial barriers to life-saving inhalers," **said State Senator Gustavo Rivera.** "No parent should have to

spend hundreds of dollars for an inhaler that can save their child's life."

"Untreated asthma unnecessarily compromises the health of thousands of New Yorkers—especially communities of color or who have low-incomes," **said Elisabeth R. Benjamin, Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Community Service Society of New York and a co-founder of Health Care for All New York.** "This smart bill will ensure that insurance cost-sharing is never a barrier to accessing life-sustaining inhalers for those who need it. It's time to stop being penny-wise and pound foolish when it comes to respiratory disease in New York."

Community Healthcare Network's President and CEO, Robert M. Hayes said "Asthma is a public health crisis in New York City, especially in the neighborhoods hardest hit by toxic air pollution. Easy access to inhalers is essential to the lives and health of New York's children and adults."

RELATED LEGISLATION

2023-S9906

- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Requires insurance coverage for inhalers at no cost

September 11, 2024

In Senate Committee Rules

Sponsored by Gustavo Rivera

Do you support this bill?