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Historic Introduction of the “New York Emergency Expedited Temporary Work Permit Act” in the New York Senate and Assembly

New York, NY — September 12, 2023 — Today, I am profoundly moved to stand before you as we introduce the historic “New York Emergency Expedited Temporary Work Permit Act” in both the New York Senate and Assembly. In this pivotal moment, I want to take a moment to recognize the invaluable partnership of my esteemed colleague, Assemblymember Catalina Cruz, who has played an instrumental role in bringing us to this historic juncture.

Assemblymember Cruz has been an unwavering advocate for justice, compassion, and the rights of asylum seekers. Her tireless dedication to this cause has been nothing short of inspiring. Together, we have forged a partnership that exemplifies the power of unity and shared purpose.

The introduction of the Asylum Seekers Worker Permit Act underscores the urgency of addressing a pressing problem that has plagued our asylum-seeking community. Current federal immigration laws have remained stagnant for far too long, forcing asylum seekers to endure months of uncertainty, unable to work legally. This unjust delay not only leaves them vulnerable to exploitation but also denies them the basic dignity of providing for themselves and their families. It is a problem that cries out for a just and compassionate solution.

The Asylum Seekers Worker Permit Act underscores New York State's ongoing leadership by once again taking the lead and setting a powerful example in addressing this pressing issue. This groundbreaking legislation offers a compassionate and practical solution, aiming to establish a program that grants asylum seekers the right to work legally and free from discrimination. In aligning with our fundamental values of fairness and inclusion, this bill represents a beacon of hope for those who have sought refuge on our shores, charting a path toward a brighter future.

Our introduction of this legislation is born out of necessity. The federal government's inaction in addressing the plight of asylum seekers has been deeply disheartening and fundamentally unjust. Outdated federal immigration laws have failed to adapt to the urgent needs of those fleeing persecution and seeking safety on American soil. The protracted delays in work permit processing and the resultant vulnerability experienced by asylum seekers are direct consequences of federal policies that have fallen short.

Assemblymember Cruz and I stand firmly united in our determination to see the Asylum Seekers Worker Permit Act enacted into law. It transcends a mere matter of justice; it is a resounding testament to our commitment to transform New York State into a place that not only dignifies but also fiercely protects the rights and well-being of all who call it home.