

Bronx Health REACH in Albany

Five-hundred Bronx residents traveled to Albany on Tuesday March 23 to ask their state legislators to "Make Health Equality a Reality." All are members of Bronx Health REACH, a coalition of Latino and African American community organizations and faith-based groups from the southwest Bronx, as well as concerned healthcare professionals, led by the Institute.

Bronx Health REACH educates community residents about diabetes and heart disease and teaches them how to get better care; addresses institutional racism and cultural bias in the healthcare delivery system; endeavors to increase continuity of care provided by hospitals and physicians; and works for legislative and regulatory changes. The group gathered on the steps of the capitol building before breaking into small groups to meet with 90 legislators.



Kwame Kitson, MD, (above, facing camera) the Institute's Director of Continuous Quality Improvement, surrounded by members of Bronx Health REACH. Dr. Kitson said, afterwards:

"Attending this event was one of the most critical and important things I've done at the Institute. To truly serve the healthcare needs of our patients we need to advocate for better healthcare for all.

Many of my patients have fears of going to hospitals or places where they may get substandard care based on bias. The patients on my team were very descriptive of abuses that their families had suffered.

I certainly felt it was important enough to give up a personal day. I wish more providers had been able to join in."



Rev. J. Albert Bush, Pastor of the Walker Memorial Baptist Church, speaking as the **Rev. Robert Foley, Sr.**, Pastor of the Cosmopolitan Church of Our Lord Jesus and clergy liaison for the REACH project, listens. The pastors called health equality "the most pressing civil rights issue of our time."



REACH coalition member **Chris Johnson** (left) holds a sign illustrating one of the issues that so concern Bronx Health REACH.



"Racial and ethnic disparities in health mean that people of color live sicker and die younger than their white counterparts...due, in part, to inequality in treatment and health education, and in part to other forms of discrimination built into the healthcare system," **Neil Calman, MD**, President and CEO of the Institute for Urban Family Health, told the crowd.