

Alliance of NYS YMCAs
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Diabetes Association.
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Association of Black Cardiologists
Capital Roots
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
NYS Area Health Education Center Systems
NYS Association of County Health Officials
NYS Association for Rural Health
NYS PTA
NYS Public Health Association
Population Health Collaborative
Schuyler Center
Bronx Health REACH
The Medical Society of the State of New York

Public health program funding is critical for the prevention and treatment of numerous chronic diseases.

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought public health to the forefront of every New Yorker's mind. Even with the hope the vaccine brings, we must continue to be prepared to navigate through the pandemic. This necessitates a continued focus on keeping New Yorkers healthy. **As organizations committed to encouraging healthier lifestyles and reducing the risks associated with chronic diseases, we ask that you restore funds to public health programs that received cuts in the Governor's Executive Budget.** The reductions to these already

underfunded programs will have drastically negative impacts on the health of New Yorkers and will exacerbate existing health disparities.

We know that prevention is key when it comes to dealing with chronic diseases. If these programs do not have the funds they need to operate effectively in our communities, schools, and workplaces, then we are subjecting New Yorkers to unnecessary suffering. In recent years, these important health programs benefiting millions of New Yorkers have either received drastic cuts or have been held to level funding. This year, the Governor's Executive budget included a 20% cut to funding. These programs reduce the morbidity and mortality of chronic diseases, including funding for the state's Hypertension Program, Obesity and Diabetes Programs, Tobacco Control Program, and Asthma Program. The cuts have also targeted maternal and child health programs, rural Health Networks, workforce programs, adult care facilities and enriched housing programs serving elderly and disabled individuals, Area Health Education Centers which promote primary care and public health careers to students in underserved communities, the Physically Handicapped Children's program, and community-based programs focused on improving health outcomes, like the Population Health Improvement Program.

Many of these state health interventions being cut exist to prevent, reduce, or delay much of the chronic disease burden including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer, and are already operating on bare-bones budgets. Heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, and asthma are the leading causes of disability and death in New York State. More than 40% of New York adults suffer from a chronic disease and six out of every 10 deaths in New York State are caused by one of these diseases. Others exist to improve the health and wellbeing of New York's mothers and children. Preventing chronic diseases like heart disease and protecting and promoting the health of pregnant women and babies are smart investments for New York State. Enriched housing programs provide an environment for seniors to stay mobile, active, safe and healthy. Moreover, many of these programs disproportionately impact low- income populations. Removing access to vital preventative health services for these communities perpetuates these health disparities. This is unjust.

Furthermore, on the heels of the 2019-20 reduction of state aid for General Public Health Work to NYC, the 2021-22 Executive Budget proposal would further reduce New York City's current reimbursement above the base grant from 20% down to 10%. The appropriation reflects this proposed cut, and projects a \$38.5 million loss in funding to NYC when fully annualized. We respectfully request restoration of this proposed cut to public health programming in the 2022 SFY Budget to ensure public health emergency response efforts are continued.

While we appreciate the existing budget deficit and understand the financial strains the COVID-19 pandemic has caused, we know that investing in prevention will reap both short- and long-term benefits. Money spent to ensure that these programs have adequate resources will

result in a healthier population with fewer chronic diseases, which in turn will save healthcare costs for years to come.

While in the throes of a global health crisis, we should not be defunding programs that reduce illness and death from chronic disease. We thank you for being a champion of public health and hope that you continue to build this legacy in 2021.

Sincerely,

The above-mentioned organizations

CC:

Dr. Howard Zucker, Commissioner of Health

Tina Kim, Assistant Secretary for Health

Robert Mujica, New York State Budget Director