



April 29, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
 Governor of New York State
 NYS State Capitol Building
 Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State has become a leader and a strong proponent for health. We urge you to continue prioritizing the health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers by continuing to fund the state's public health programs and Medicaid. While in the throes of a global health crisis, we should not be defunding programs that reduce the morbidity and mortality of chronic disease and provide critical health care coverage to New York's most vulnerable residents.

Sadly, 40% of New York adults suffer from a chronic disease and six out of every 10 deaths in New York are caused by one of these diseases. New Yorkers cannot afford to live without these vital health programs. Moreover, many of these programs disproportionately impact low income populations.

Removing access to vital preventative health services for these communities perpetuates these health disparities.

Any reduction in funding to these already underfunded public health programs would have drastic impacts for the health of New Yorkers. Therefore, we respectfully request that the following programs maintain their funding: the Heart Healthy Program, Cancer Services Program, Tobacco Control Program, Obesity and Diabetes Programs, and Asthma Program, as well as programs dealing with maternal and child health, lead poisoning prevention, rural Health Networks, workforce programs, community-based programs focused on improving health and mental health outcomes, adult care facilities and enriched housing programs serving elderly and disabled individuals, School-Based Health Centers, the Physically Handicapped Children's program, and community-based programs focused on improving health outcomes.

Furthermore, access to timely and affordable health care is essential to curbing the spread of COVID-19 and protecting the health of all Americans, especially those with underlying health conditions, like cancer, heart disease or diabetes, who are at heightened risk. More than seven million low-income and disabled children, adults, and seniors rely on New York State's Medicaid program in order to receive health care coverage and access to the health care system. Many newly uninsured workers will be looking to Medicaid to allow them to get health care if they need it and to protect their families financially if they get sick.

Rather than cut essential public health programs and Medicaid funding, New York must consider raising our cigarette tax by \$1.00 per pack and increase the tax on other tobacco products. Raising the price of tobacco is one of the most effective tobacco prevention and control strategies, however New York's cigarette and tobacco taxes have remained static for 10 years. Increasing the price of cigarettes not only raises critical revenue – it decreases the prevalence of tobacco use, particularly among youth and young adults.

Our respective organizations each ask for continued Medicaid funding and a retention of the funding provided for the public health programs as appropriated in the FY 2020-2021 budget.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Diabetes Association

American Heart Association

American Nurses Association-New York

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

Capital Roots

Children's Agenda

Children's Defense Fund

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Community Health Care Association of New York State

Family Health / Bronx Health REACH

Healthy Capital District Initiative

Hispanic Federation

LeadingAge New York

Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Program in Nutrition, Teachers College Columbia University

Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
March of Dimes
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
Mental Health Association of New York State
National Alliance on Mental Illness New York State (NAMI-NYS)
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York Public Interest Research Group
New York School-Based Health Alliance
New York State Academy of Family Physicians
New York State Association of County Health Officials
New York State Association for Rural Health
New York State Public Health Association
Northeast Kidney Foundation
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
The Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning

CC:

Dr. Howard Zucker, Commissioner of NYS Department of Health;
Paul Francis, Secretary for Health, NYS Executive Chamber;
Megan Baldwin, Assistant Secretary for Health, NYS Executive Chamber;
Robert Mujica, Director of Division of Budget
Frank Walsh, Chief Budget Examiner, Division of Budget
Bradley Hutton, Deputy Commissioner, New York State Department of Health