

May 5th, 2022

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader, New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker, New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

RE: SUPPORT A7230-B (Gottfried) / S6534-C (Rivera)

Dear Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

The undersigned strongly believe that primary care is the backbone of our health care system and that meaningful access to quality primary care saves lives, improves individual and community health outcomes and creates stronger communities. As a result, primary care is unequivocally central to health equity—yet we continue to undervalue and underfund it, and the effects are felt most acutely by marginalized communities. **Therefore, we urge you to support A7230B (Gottfried)/S6534C (Rivera) to strengthen New York’s primary care infrastructure and improve the lives of all New Yorkers.**

Primary care is a cornerstone of vibrant, thriving communities and helps keep families healthy, children ready to learn, and adults able to pursue education and participate in the workforce. Regular access to primary care is consistently associated with positive health outcomes.¹ Indeed, an increase of just one primary care physician per 10,000 people can generate 5.5% fewer hospital visits, 11% fewer emergency department visits, and 7% fewer surgeries.² Access to primary care is also key social determinant of health and pivotal to the educational and economic success of struggling families.³ Further, not only is primary care the only part of the health system that has been proven to lengthen lives and reduce inequities at the population level, it has also been shown to reduce overall health care costs.⁴

While primary care holds this central, proven role in improving population health and increasing health equity – nationally, only about 5 to 7 percent of all health care expenditures are for primary care.⁵ New York’s underserved communities have a pressing need for primary care, yet the providers and institutions that serve them have been unable to sufficiently sustain, expand, and improve services due to long-standing and systemic underfunding and undervaluing of primary care services.

The lack of adequate investments in primary care has left New York’s primary care infrastructure unequipped to protect the health of our communities – and left New Yorkers vulnerable to threats such as COVID-19. People living in historically disinvested and rural communities, people of color, and low-income people had less access to primary care even before the pandemic, and many of these communities have been impacted by disinvestment in other ways, including by systemic racism such as redlining policies. These communities experience high rates of chronic disease,⁶ many of which can be prevented or managed through better primary care, and partly as a result suffered both more COVID infections and greater COVID-related mortality and morbidity. **A7230B/S6534C** would take critical steps toward meeting urgent needs raised by COVID-19 as well as increasing health equity and, in the long term, reducing burgeoning health care costs.

New York spends higher than the national average on per-person health care costs *in general*, yet our state consistently ranks below many other states in key health indicators such as low birth weight, preventable hospitalizations, and childhood immunizations, all of which can be improved with better access to primary care.⁷ While New York State does not currently define or measure spending on primary care, it is already clear from this data that New York’s health system is failing to put adequate resources towards it – **A7230B/S6534C** is a necessary first step to help lawmakers and regulators understand where our health resources are being spent now and where they should be going.

A7230B/S6534C will move New York closer to health equity and help protect and improve the health of all

communities in the wake of the pandemic. The undersigned urge its swift passage to strengthen New York's primary care infrastructure and improve the lives of all New Yorkers.

For any questions, please contact:

Maura Harris | Primary Care Development Corporation (PCDC) | mharris@pcdc.org | 212-437-3907

Signed,

Louise Cohen
Chief Executive Officer, Primary Care Development Corporation

1199 SEIU
AIDS Healthcare Foundation
American Academy of Pediatrics, NYS, Chapters 1, 2 & 3
Apicha Community Health Center
Betances Health Center
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
Care for the Homeless
Community Health Care Association of New York State
Community Health Center of Richmond, Inc.
Community Healthcare Network
East Harlem Council for Human Services Inc./Boriken Neighborhood Health Center
Evergreen Health
Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization
GMHC
Harlem United
Housing Works, Inc.
Hudson Headwaters Health Network
Institute for Community Living, Inc.
Interborough Developmental and Consultation Center
National Hispanic Medical Association
New York State Public Health Association
New York State Society of PAs
Nurse Practitioner Association New York State
NYC Health + Hospitals
NYS Academy of Family Physicians
Rural Health Network of South Central NY
Ryan Chelsea-Clinton
Ryan Health
Sun River Health
The Coalition for Behavioral Health
Trillium Health, Inc.
Urban Health Plan, Inc.

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- ¹ Leiyu Shi, *The Impact of Primary Care: A Focused Review*, Scientifica (Cairo), December 31, 2012, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3820521/>.
- ² Steven J. Kravet et al., *Health Care Utilization and the Proportion of Primary Care Physicians*, 121 Am. J. Med. 142 (2007), abstract available at [https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343\(07\)01088-1/fulltext](https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343(07)01088-1/fulltext).
- ³ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Access to Primary Care, <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/access-to-primary> (last visited January 31, 2022).
- ⁴ Sanjay Basu, et al., *Association of Primary Care Physician Supply With Population Mortality in the United States, 2005-2015*, 179 JAMA Intern.Med. 506 (2019), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6450307/>; Barbara Starfield, Leiyu Shi, & James Macinko, *Contribution of Primary Care to Health Systems and Health*, 83 Milbank Q. 457 (2005), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2690145/>; Barbara Starfield, *Primary care: an increasingly important contributor to effectiveness, equity, and efficiency of health services*. SESPAS report 2012, 26 INFORME SESPAS 20 (2012), available at <https://www.gacetasanitaria.org/en-primary-care-an-increasingly-important-articulo-S0213911111003876>; Dartmouth Atlas Project, *The Care of Patients With Severe Chronic Disease: An Online Report on the Medicare Program, 2006*, available at https://data.dartmouthatlas.org/downloads/atlas/2006_Chronic_Care_Atlas.pdf; Robert M. Politzer, Jean Yoon, Leiyu Shi, et al., *Inequality in America: The Contribution of Health Centers in Reducing and Eliminating Disparities in Access to Care* 58 Med. Care & Research Rev. 234 (2001)
- ⁵ National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine, *Implementing High-Quality Primary Care: Rebuilding the Foundation of Health Care*, Chapter 3(2021), available at <https://www.nap.edu/read/25983/chapter/3>; Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative, *Investing in Primary Care: A State Level Analysis*, July 2019, available at https://www.pcpcc.org/sites/default/files/resources/pcmh_evidence_report_2019_0.pdf; Sara Martin, et al., *Primary Care Spending in the United States, 2002-2016*, 180 JAMA Intern. Med. 1019 (2020) available at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2765245>.
- ⁶ Primary Care Development Corporation, *The intersection of COVID-19 and chronic disease in New York City: underscores the immediate need to strengthen primary care systems to avoid deepening health disparities*, Points On Care Series, May 2020, <https://www.pcdc.org/wp-content/uploads/Points-on-Care--Issue-3-COVID--FINAL.pdf>.
- ⁷ New York State Health Foundation, *Health Care Spending Trends in New York State*, October 2017, available at <https://nyshealthfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/health-care-spending-trends-new-york-2017.pdf>; United Health Foundation, *America's Health Rankings New York Summary 2021*, available at https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Overall_a/state/NY (last visited January 31, 2022).