

PEOPLE'S BUDGET COALITION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

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PUBLIC HEALTH IS THE HEART OF THE CITY

The People's Budget Coalition for Public Health rallied today in front of 250 Broadway (across from City Hall) spotlighting are to the well-being of the city and thus should not be on the Mayor's chopping block. The coalition brings together people who are affected by these cuts and people who provide the services. The coalition is comprised of concerned New York City residents, public health advocates, community-based and city-wide organizations, unions, and clergy focused on the health of our communities.

"The Mayor's cuts will have a dramatic impact on the ability of our communities to be healthy," said Judy Wessler, Director of the Commission on the Public's Health System (CPHS). "The proposals hit hard and slash services and programs needed by children and their families, and people in communities who are ill or coping with health and mental health issues. There are other revenue sources that the Mayor and Council could tap so that they do not have to strip services that make communities already under fiscal hardship, any more troubled than they already are." "We need our public health safety net at a time when there are illnesses and epidemics swirling in our neighborhoods," said Anthony Feliciano, Education/Outreach Coordinator at CPHS.

. "It is essential that the Mayor and the City Council restore funding for interventions that keep children healthy and provide them with a solid foundation for a line time of good health. Investing in child health clinics, school based dental clinics, mental health treatment, and services to combat infant mortality, obesity, and asthma is nothing other than sound public policy – good for children and good for government," said Jennifer March-Joly, Executive Director of Citizens' Committee for Children.

The programs and services on the chopping block are:

- Children's Dental Clinics - \$2.5 million – would be closed
- Child Health Clinics - \$6.1 million – would be cut
- Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative - \$3.5 million would be ended
- HIV/AIDS Prevention and Services - \$17 million – would be cut
- Primary Care Initiative - \$4.7 million – would be eliminated

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- Supplemental School Health Services - \$754,000 would be cut
- Mental health, mental retardation, and development disability in HHC - \$1.4 million
- Elizabeth Pouch Center on Staten Island - \$800,000 - would be closed
- Mental Health Treatment for Children under 5 - \$1.6 million – would be eliminated.

These cuts and the ending of programs will have an untoward affect on many vulnerable communities according to coalition members.

“We all have to be vigilant about protecting the most vulnerable New Yorkers during these difficult times,” said Noilyn Abesamis-Mendoza, Health Policy Manager, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). “As government programs are reduced because of budget constraints, many community organizations are bearing the extra brunt without the resources we need to provide services. To prevent the elimination of culturally and linguistically appropriate services for Asian American communities, CACF strongly urges Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council to protect the safety net, particularly for limited-English Asian Americans and immigrants who may sink through the cracks,” Ms. Abesamis-Mendoza said.

Shamefully, Mayor Bloomberg is pushing to slash Council-funded programs like the Child Health Clinics that save lives in poor communities,” said Joann Casado, Executive Director of the Bronx Health Link. “The rate of infant deaths has declined since the Council’s Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative began funding community-based education and outreach efforts. But because the budget is still inadequate to meet the need, the death rate continues to be unacceptably high, especially in Black and Puerto Rican communities. So elimination of the program is the exact opposite of what’s needed. When there are untapped revenue sources available, it’s unacceptable to balance the budget on the backs of the most underserved.”

"For more than a century, New York City has led the country in the field of public health. But the proposal to eliminate the Oral Health Program will deny thousands of NYC school children the dental care they desperately need and can't find elsewhere." Dr. Barry Liebowitz, President, Doctors Council SEIU.

Maria Pittman, a mother of three and resident of the Bronx said: “For 16 years, we have had the same doctor at the Washington Heights Child Health Clinic. I have felt

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comfortable there and the clinic has provided excellent health care for my three children – one who has asthma and the other diabetes. If we were to be cut off from that, or services were lost because of budget cuts, it would devastate us because the people there are like family and I will have no other place to take my children.”

A mother in Brooklyn, who uses the resources of the Brooklyn Perinatal Network said: “Without agencies like this, that help us to access services and other resources in the community, I would not be able to use them. This is because they are not well known to me and many others, We need to see more agencies like this funded to aid community residents, such as myself a single, working parent with a very limited income, information and time to search for and to find the services I need to help me keep myself and baby healthy”

“It is frankly unfathomable that during a time of economic downturn that health care services for New York’s poor goes on the chopping block. Over \$17 million dollars for HIV prevention, services and housing have been cut in the Mayor’s budget at the same time that new HIV infections are rising and more and more HIV-ill folks are without permanent housing. New York City, particularly in communities of color, remains the epicenter of this epidemic and this dubious distinction can only be made worse with these cuts. There is still time to right this ship and we strongly urge Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council to protect our most poor, our ill and our vulnerable,” said Terri Smith-Caronia of Housing Works.

“There are severe shortages of available health services, particularly dental care, in Chinatown and the Lower East Side,” said Peter Cheng, Director of IndoChina Sino-American Community Center. “If these cuts go through we will lose two child dental clinics in this community. This loss and the other cuts are simply unacceptable and will continue to widen the disparities in access to health care services for immigrant and communities of color.”

“The New York City Council has an opportunity to aid in the healing of New York City’s injured public health system. We urge the Council to restore much needed funds and protect public health programs that are crucial for our children, their families, and all our communities,” said Juanita Lara, Supervisor of Health Advocacy, Make the Road New York.

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