

STATEMENT OF THE NYC BOARD OF HEALTH:
The New York City Health Department's Continued Work is
Critical to Protecting Public Health

WHEREAS, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) is required by law to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives in, works in, or visits New York City;

WHEREAS, the NYC Health Department has demonstrated its public health expertise over two centuries of interventions and programming that have resulted in improving NYC's health and life expectancy;

WHEREAS, since its establishment more than 220 years ago to combat infectious and deadly yellow fever, the NYC Health Department has propelled a public health revolution with its lifesaving services: facilitating the availability of fresh water in the 1820s; battling cholera in the 1850s; inspecting milk in the 1870s; fighting diphtheria in the 1890s; and vaccinating hundreds of thousands against smallpox in 1900, among other cutting edge health reforms;

WHEREAS, the NYC Health Department has scaled and modernized its capabilities to protect and improve the millions of lives it now serves: it vaccinated 6.7 million people against smallpox in a single month in 1947; pioneered the protection of children from lead poisoning in 1960; curtailed a tuberculosis epidemic in the 1990s; managed measles outbreaks in 2018-9; and led NYC through the COVID-19 pandemic, including vaccination efforts resulting in almost 90% of all New Yorkers receiving at least one protective shot;

WHEREAS, the NYC Health Department stands at the forefront of ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, ability to pay, or ability to speak English, have access to the health information and services they need to live and thrive: in 1921, the NYC Health Department opened the first District Health Center in Harlem to address local health needs of community members; centers in the Bronx and Brooklyn followed; three Neighborhood Health Action Centers in East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Central Brooklyn, currently serve New Yorkers marginalized by decades of disinvestment and deserving of equitable and just service delivery; the Race to Justice reform effort launched in 2015 teaches staff how to better address racial health inequities and improve health outcomes for all New Yorkers;

WHEREAS, the NYC Health Department has long advocated for and supported mental and behavioral health needs of New Yorkers including by opening the first ever supportive housing programs in the nation in 1980; standing up, in collaboration with state and local partners, the first legally authorized syringe exchange program in the State in 1993; and continuing to innovate comprehensive behavioral and mental health services for New Yorkers through its Care, Community, Action mental health plan;

WHEREAS, this year, our nation has seen rapid and extreme federal action to undermine public health, including the defunding and dismissal of 10,000 full-time employees of the nation's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); severance of access to basic medical care, vaccines, medicines, food, clean water, and humanitarian assistance to millions of people globally

through the shuttering of USAID; and curtailment of information sharing, outbreak preparedness and response, and investments in global public health infrastructure through a retreat from the World Health Organization;

WHEREAS, from HIV to Zika to Ebola to the COVID-19 pandemic and mpox outbreaks, it is evident that global public health challenges become local to New York City;

WHEREAS, in late March 2025, without notice, HHS terminated billions of critical public health funding across the country that supports disease surveillance and detection, Public Health Laboratory capacity, vaccination activities, and community outreach and education including over \$100 million to the NYC Health Department;

WHEREAS, the NYC Health Department relies on federal funding for 20% of its annual budget, or around \$600 million, to maintain the Health Department's capacity for critical services related to infectious disease surveillance and detection, modernization of our public health infrastructure, laboratory services, addressing health equity, and emergency preparedness and response;

WHEREAS, it is critical to the lives of New Yorkers that the NYC Health Department continue taking care of New Yorkers by preventing the spread of disease, providing essential health services, and increasing life expectancy through the promotion of public health and health equity initiatives;

NOW THEREFORE, it is **RESOLVED**, that the New York City Board of Health

1. Affirms the responsibility of the NYC Health Department to protect and promote the health of all New Yorkers, regardless of who they are, where they are from, and where they live and reaffirms the Department's commitment to its values of accountability, compassion, equity, excellence, integrity, rigor, and transparency;
2. Commends the staff of the NYC Health Department for their honorable and expert service in pursuit of the Department's mission, upholding City Charter, Health Code and other legal mandates, as well as their commitment to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers, including those most marginalized, and advance the goals of equity and access to essential public health and behavioral health services for all New Yorkers regardless of age, race, gender, national origin, disability, income, sexual orientation, marital status, need or neighborhood;
3. Requires the NYC Health Department to continue its rigorous review and implementation of science-based public health guidance and recommendations to ensure the best possible public health practice in New York City, which includes directing resources to communities that will benefit most, and to continue to combat misinformation through the dissemination of evidence-based information;

4. Affirms the expectation that the NYC Health Department will continue to engage, partner and collaborate with city, state, regional and national public health organizations to gather and share information, best practices, data reflecting all New Yorkers in support of public health promotion, illness prevention, population health and wellness for New Yorkers; to advance public health and behavioral health science; and to respond to health emergencies;
5. Affirms the commitment of the New York City Health Department to: 1) monitor and assess the impact of policy, program and budget changes on Department operations, public health staffing levels and other changes to essential public health and behavioral health services that would impair the ability of the New York City Health Department to keep New Yorkers healthy and/or perform its essential public health and behavioral health functions and, 2) report potential remedies to the New York City Board of Health;
6. Affirms the role of duly elected and appointed officials to act to prevent harmful federal, state or local legislative, regulatory and programmatic mandates, public health staffing reductions and other harmful changes to essential public health and behavioral health services, that would impair the ability of the New York City Health Department to keep New Yorkers healthy; and
7. Affirms the commitment of the New York City Board of Health to 1) uphold the public health and behavioral health provisions of the New York City Charter and Health Code; 2) review proposals and adopt changes in the New York City Health Code to promote health, public health and safety; 3) monitor the impact of proposed changes in legislation, regulations, policy, program, staffing and/or budgets; 4) issue public statements; and 5) engage the Department of Health and otherwise take action to maintain the health and wellbeing of New Yorkers.

Dated: June 5, 2025