



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Alister F. Martin, MD, MPP
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STATEMENT FROM NYC HEALTH COMMISSIONER DR. ALISTER F. MARTIN IN
RECOGNITION OF JUNETEENTH**

NEW YORK, NY — New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Alister F. Martin issued the following statement in recognition of Juneteenth:

“Juneteenth marks the anniversary of when enslaved people in Texas learned they were free over two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. For Black New Yorkers who are descendants of enslaved people, the day symbolizes both the joy of liberation and the grief of a nation that fails to reconcile its history.

At the NYC Health Department, we build on this history by closing longstanding health inequities. Despite reaching the city’s highest life expectancy, Black New Yorkers are still dying about five years earlier than the average New Yorker. This is a result of historic disinvestment in Black communities, and that is why we are changing that. Programs like the Citywide Doula Initiative, Nurse Family Partnership, and the Newborn Home Visiting Program address inequities in maternal health, while our Neighborhood Health Action Centers in Brownsville, East Harlem, and Tremont address health inequities in the communities where they are felt the most.

Our research shows what these communities have long known: health and wealth are intertwined. Access to stable housing, economic opportunity, and community resources all determine health outcomes. Advancing health equity requires improving these drivers long before someone enters an emergency room. Protecting low-cost health care options, relieving medical debt, preventing evictions, and ensuring access to benefits are all part of the solution. Because working toward a more affordable city means working toward a more just, equitable, and healthier one, too.

As the son of a Haitian immigrant, I learned early in life that freedom is not handed down but won through struggle and preserved through memory. Haiti, the world's first Black republic, stands as a powerful example of what people can achieve when they refuse to accept injustice. That legacy continues to inspire me and informs our work each day.

Juneteenth reminds us that liberation is not simply a moment in history, but requires an ongoing commitment to equity, opportunity, and justice across generations. Today, and every day, let us honor those who came before us by continuing to advance equity, justice, and health for generations to come.”

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