



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD
Commissioner

Testimony

of

Joaquin Aracena
Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Public Health Clinics
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

before the

New York City Council
Committee on Health

on

Introduction 435-A-2024

June 18, 2024
New York, NY

Good morning, Chair Schulman and members of the Committee on Health. My name is Joaquin Aracena, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Public Health Clinics at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (the NYC Health Department). On behalf of Commissioner Vasan, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Introduction 435-A, which would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to ensure accessibility to rapid testing for sexually transmitted infections, prioritizing communities in boroughs that have higher infection rates as determined by the Department.

Since the NYC Health Department last testified on this bill in 2023, we have had extensive conversations with Councilmember Sanchez, Committee staff, and City Hall regarding this legislation and are supportive of it moving forward. I want to thank Councilmember Sanchez for her passionate advocacy in seeking to bring down STI rates in our City. We share her goal in this endeavor. I also want to thank the Councilmember for discussing our concerns with the legislation, listening, and working with us to come to a solution. We appreciate the Councilmember's willingness for open dialogue and for sharing her vision for the bill. I look forward to continuing the conversation on this legislation with Councilmember Sanchez, Council staff, and our colleagues at City Hall.

Furthermore, I want to make sure that everyone is aware that individuals 12 or older can receive low- to no-cost services at any of our Sexual Health Clinics across the city, all of which offer STI testing, including rapid HIV testing. Two clinics, Chelsea and Fort Greene, currently offer Quickie Express visits for rapid chlamydia and gonorrhea testing, with test results within hours. The NYC Health Department also funds numerous agencies across New York City to offer routine STI testing, including rapid HIV testing, in clinical and nonclinical settings. New Yorkers can also consult the NYC Health Map to find sexual health services. We ask for the City Council's support in reaching your constituents to let them know about the STI testing resources available to them.

Thank you for your time and attention. We are always willing to discuss your legislative proposals, and I encourage you to reach out to our Legislative Affairs team and City Hall to do so.