



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

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Acting Health Commissioner

Testimony

of

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

before the

New York City Council

Committee on Mental Health and Addiction

On

Pre-considered Introduction T2026-0155

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250 Broadway, Hearing Room 1

New York, NY

Thank you Chair Caban and members of the committee for allowing us to submit written testimony on T2026-155, which requires the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) to report annually on suicides that occur in the city.

This bill was previously heard in September of 2025. Since then, the Health Department has engaged in conversation with Council member Louis and committee staff. We appreciate Council's openness to our feedback and Council member Louis' commitment to strengthening suicide reporting efforts, which are critical to understanding risk factors and prevention strategies to save lives. The Health Department publishes suicide data annually in our Annual Vital Statistics Summary Report, and on the HealthyNYC webpage and the Epiquery data portal. We support the intent of the legislation.

Suicide is preventable. 988 is a critical resource for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis, searching for mental health resources, or just needs to talk. Anyone can use 988 at any time of day or night, any day of the year, to speak with a trained crisis counselor or peer support specialist. We want to encourage any New Yorker to utilize 988 for their mental health needs, and we have put considerable effort into making it easy to access.

988 is designed to be accessible for everyone by phone, text, and online chat. Services are staffed with people who speak English and Spanish with additional interpretation services available in more than 200 languages. Callers are also never asked to disclose their immigration status. NYC 988 counselors are also trained to accept calls from deaf and hard of hearing individuals using video relay services.

988 counselors and peers will listen to a person's situation and help them through a moment of crisis with emotional support and coping skills. 988 provides custom local counseling and resources consistent with national standards and best practices. We welcome continued collaboration with Council to promote 988 to all New Yorkers.

The Health Department is also working on suicide prevention efforts for young New Yorkers. The Caring Transitions program which focuses on youth ages 5-17 in Queens and the Bronx who have been hospitalized or seen at an Emergency Department for a suicide attempt or serious suicidal behavior. The Caring Transitions team, which includes clinical staff, as well as family and youth peer advocates, provides 90 days of follow-up to the youth and their family after the youth has been discharged from the hospital.

The Health Department, along with the Mayor's Office of Equity, funded two demonstration programs that have recently begun: Family Check-Up for Asian American Families and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for Adolescents. We are excited to evaluate the results of these programs. Additionally, we partner with NYC Public Schools to provide suicide awareness and prevention trainings to school nurses and school suicide liaisons in all schools.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written testimony. We look forward to working with the Chair and the committee.