



United Way
of New York City

2024 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Health on January 23rd, 2024

To: Senator Gustavo Rivera and Assemblymember Amy Paulin

From: Abdullah Younus, Vice President of Government Relations, United Way of New York City

Date: January 23, 2024

Dear Senator Rivera and Assemblymember Paulin,

We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Health on behalf of United Way of New York City (UWNYC) and our over 700 partner organizations across New York City. Thank you for your leadership in addressing the disparate outcomes in healthcare for communities of color and for those living in poverty. **We are writing to request the renewal of \$5 million in funding for UWNYC's existing Preventative Care Access- initiative (PCA)** that is currently administered through the NYSDOH's Center for Community Health. This will allow us to expand our programming in **all** 5 boroughs, especially targeting more NYCHA developments, and also support more maternal health and mental health screenings as part of the initiative.

Community-based preventative care programs play an important role in improving health outcomes, particularly for Black and Latine communities which experience lower levels of access to medical care and poorer health outcomes. A fragmented healthcare system and the dearth of providers in poor communities contribute significantly to these healthcare disparities across racial and ethnic groups. This gap impacts **equitable** preventative services particularly in low-income and minority communities, which UWNYC's program aims to remedy. These disparities become more apparent in Black and Latine communities, where disease prevalence including diabetes, hypertension, and obesity combined with the lack of access to quality primary care and poor social determinants of health exacerbate the prevalence and severity of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, anxiety-related illnesses.

UWNYC'S Preventative Care Access- initiative (PCA) addresses these disparities by working with 24 New York City community-based organizations (CBO) and faith-based institutions located in all 5 New York City boroughs to reduce the gaps in access to health screenings, immunizations, vaccinations and health education and promotion services for 20,000 low-income Black and Latine adults at-risk for poor health-outcomes. The PCA- initiative encompasses a two-pronged approach: (1) the program increases access to preventative health and social determinants of health screenings for individuals residing in communities where there is a dearth of healthcare providers and prevalence of chronic diseases; and (2) expands community-based organizations in the social-service sector to promote community wellness and health care. The program also focuses on key New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) programs to host health screening events and programs. Our support for communities includes leveraging partnerships to remove barriers to accessing health such as providing 4,168 Lyft rides and 30,044 free meals.

With your support, UWNYC would like to expand access to maternal and mental health screenings as part of the PCA-initiative. In NYC, Black birthing people were on average nine times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related death compared to White birthing people. New York City and the country are facing an alarming crisis of inequity that we must address. UWNYC's PCA-initiative provides critical healthcare services to low-income communities of color. From July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023, in total, UWNYC has engaged more than 25,000 New Yorkers in programming through 1,015 community wellness and screening events, 4,892 social determinants of health (SDOH) screenings, over 3,000 diagnostic health screenings, 1,549 COVID vaccinations, and 3,777 COVID tests, among other services.

A renewed investment of \$5 million will help maintain and expand this program to serve even more vulnerable New Yorkers and allow UWNYC to expand the preventative care program by adding technology capacity, health equity training, skills development for health advocacy staff, and enhanced closed loop referrals to address maternal and mental health needs of at-risk individuals who lack a consistent medical home.

Thank you for your time and ongoing support.

Respectfully,

Abdullah Younus

Vice President of Government Relations

United Way of New York City