



2023 Joint Legislative Hearing

Health
Feb 28, 2023

Testimony of

The New York State LGBT Health and Human Services Network

New York State



Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the 2023 joint legislative budget regarding health.

About The Network.

The New York State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health & Human Services Network (The Network) is a coalition founded in 1994 and administered by The LGBT Community Center of New York. We are formed by over 60 LGBT-specific and LGBT-supportive nonprofit organizations that provide care to LGBT New Yorkers and our families across all regions of the State.

Network members collaborate to increase our shared capacity to provide access to LGBTQ+ culturally-competent health and human services to every person across the State. We do this to advance the safety, freedom, quality of life, and well-being of all LGBTQ+ people across New York State and beyond. We support and learn from each other, help build capacity and increase our ability to foster a safer and more supportive state for all LGBT people.

About Our Services.

Network members provide life-saving services to over 1.5 million New Yorkers every year. By implementing an impressive array of social, economic, and medical interventions across all geographies of our diverse State, Network members, especially those in the state's most rural areas, often represent the only LGBTQ-affirming provider in their towns, cities or even entire counties. Our members located in urban and suburban areas offer unique LGBTQ-affirming programming to reach traditionally underserved communities, especially, Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Communities, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Communities, older adults, youth, immigrants, and people with disabilities.



The mission of our coalition aligns with New York State's aim of improving population health, enhancing the quality of patient care, and reducing the per capita cost of healthcare. Most Network members also offer cultural competency trainings throughout their regions, allowing quality patient care to integrate into public and private healthcare settings.

Despite an increase in the need for affirmative healthcare, social, and human services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have observed a steady decline in both the number of clients served by Network members and the funding available from their most significant sources of revenue. The limited financial capacity of community organizations and medical providers has overwhelmingly impacted clients with already low access to technology, housing, transportation, free time, and support systems.

The reduction in the services provided by Network members has disproportionately affected Black and Latino clients, who have had a 37% and 12% decrease in the number of clients served by Network members from each group between 2020 and 2021. At the same time, there is a 10% decrease in the number of immigrant and refugee clients, a 13% reduction in TGNC clients, 17% and 18% fewer young and older clients, respectively, and 18% fewer clients with disabilities. With program costs soaring due to historic inflation of 10%, sustained state investment is pivotal to stopping this downward trend.

About the Sustainable Future of Our Communities.

To address the gap between community needs and accessible services and to sustain the capacity of Network members to serve LGBTQ+ communities around the State, we respectfully request a sustained budget of 12 million dollars in the executive budget for FY24. Additionally, we ask for \$700,000 in funding from the legislature to help sustain this initiative, bringing the total combined investment to 12.7 million.

Investing in the capacity of Network members to provide high-quality, culturally competent services to the LGBTQ communities around the State through the NYS LGBT HHS Network is the most cost-effective way to stop this downward trend in funding and service provision. It is also a crucial element for New York to remain a



leader in providing accessible, culturally competent, LGBTQ+ affirmative health and human services.

Every dollar invested in Network organizations saves 16 dollars in future healthcare costs to the State of New York. An additional 7.733 million dollars will save the State more than \$123 million. The total 12.7 million dollar investment can save over \$203 million in future costs.

Investing in strengthening and expanding programs targeted to specific communities, such as elders, youth, people with disabilities, immigrants, TGNC people, and BIPOC communities, will impact the lives of historically marginalized groups and restore trust in the present and future of New York State. By sustaining this \$12.7 million investment, Network members will:

- Develop programs and increase capacity to provide LGBTQ-affirming health and human services to community members.
- Develop targeted outreach programs to specific groups: BIPOC clients, older clients, youth, people with disabilities, immigrants, low-income, and TGNC clients.
- Improve and strengthen organizational infrastructure for a safe reopening and design and implement hybrid work models: staff salaries and benefits, equipment, technology, software, and program supplies.
- Cover increased operating costs such as rent, cleaning, and sanitizing supplies.
- Provide LGBTQ+ cultural competency training to expand the service capacity of the State.

Across the State, LGBTQ individuals face unique and disproportionate challenges due to existing health and economic disparities. We are more likely to be immunocompromised and encounter barriers to accessing medical care. After decades of fighting the AIDS epidemic, we again face serious challenges accessing quality, compassionate, and affirming healthcare services.



Over the last two years, the social and economic downturn has increased the demand for services to meet our community's most basic needs. This includes severe social isolation, economic instability, mental health symptoms, and food instability. Network members also reported that 57% of their clients had serious challenges accessing LGBTQ-affirming healthcare services.

As the legislature prepares for its budget negotiations, we ask that you prioritize funding the services that we mentioned above. Thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to provide this testimony today on an issue of great importance across New York State. We look forward to continuing working with you to ensure New York's future as a safe space for all New Yorkers.

Respectfully yours,

Vladimir Tlali
Network Director