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Facing Rise in Tuberculosis, Health Chair Levine and Advocates Call on City to Restore Funding

City Hall, NY, NY. May 14, 2018 – Today, City Council Health Chair Mark Levine was joined by colleagues and advocates to call on the City to increase Tuberculosis (TB) funding for the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Bureau of Tuberculosis Control (BTBC).

TB is a communicable airborne disease and the leading infectious killer worldwide. In 2017, there were 613 new TB cases in NYC, a 10 percent increase. This marked the city's first increase since 2003 and its largest since 1993.

Multidrug-resistant TB, which is more difficult to treat-- costing about \$300,000 per case--is also on the rise. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York has the 3rd highest TB case rate in the nation, disproportionately hitting immigrant communities the hardest, as 85% of New Yorkers with TB are foreign born.

Over the past 10 years, federal, state and city funding for TB has been cut by more than half, dropping from \$29 million in 2007 to \$14.7 million in 2017, with only \$8.6M of that coming from the City.

DOHMH currently operates four Chest Center clinics to provide free evaluation and treatment for Tuberculosis (TB), down from nine clinics prior to the funding cuts over the past ten years. The clinics offer free TB testing, chest x-rays, medical evaluations, and treatment for both active TB disease and for TB infection.

Restored funding would help reverse the increase in TB cases in New York City by returning clinics to full-time operating hours, restoring vital staff to the clinics and hiring additional staff to conduct outreach and care in the most needed communities.

"I stand with NYC Council Health Committee Chair Mark Levine in calling on the city to increase funding for the DOHMH's Bureau of Tuberculosis Control," said **NYC Council Finance Chair Daniel Dromm**. "The TB infection rate in NYC is climbing rapidly, yet funding to fight back against the disease is at a record low. This is a recipe for disaster. NYC needs to take immediate action to address what is fast becoming a public health emergency."

"We are in grave danger of repeating history. Similar budget cuts to TB during the 1970s and 1980s led to a disastrous TB outbreak that cost over \$1 billion to fix. That TB-- a preventable, curable disease-- is on the rise again in our city, with its wealth of resources, is inexcusable. We can't afford to underfund the TB response," said **Erica Lessem, Deputy Executive Director, TB from Treatment Action Group**.

“TB is the leading killer of people with HIV worldwide, and Americans are not immune, especially in our communities of color and immigrant communities,” stated **Guillermo Chacon, President of the Latino Commission on AIDS and President of the Hispanic Health Network**. “If New York is serious about being the healthiest state, we must address TB. If New York is to honor its commitment to end the HIV epidemic, we cannot forget about TB, its most deadly—but preventable, curable—coinfection.”

“Budget cuts reduce community groups’ ability to provide the free services necessary to find TB early and prevent it from spreading or developing,” said **African Services Committee Director of Advocacy, Amanda Lugg**. “Members of the immigrant community are suffering unnecessarily from this preventable, curable disease.”

Council Member Peter Koo said, “With NYC seeing its first rise in new TB cases since 1993, there is absolutely no reason to cut the funding that is necessary to fight the prevalence of this disease. As a global city, we be sure to always stay one step ahead of communicable airborne diseases like TB. Thank you to Council Health Chair Mark Levine for urging the city to restore this important funding.”

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