

To: Mayor Bill de Blasio
Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Herminia Palacio Commissioner
Commissioner Nisha Agarwal, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

May 22, 2018

Open letter: Urgent meeting request to discuss New York's TB crisis

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Deputy Mayor Dr. Palacio, and Commissioner Agarwal,

As your constituents, we write you again to follow up on our letter dated March 12th and urge your leadership in combatting the growing threat of tuberculosis (TB) in New York City.

New York City's TB program leads the world in adopting cutting-edge, cost-effective ways to prevent, detect, and treat TB. But the City has the third highest TB case rate in the U.S, and while TB is on the decline throughout most of the country, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Bureau of TB Control (BTBC) reported a 10% increase in TB cases. This includes rising drug-resistant TB, which is even more difficult and costly to treat. Our city's immigrants are unduly affected, carrying 86% of cases.

Such trends are a direct result of the scant resources to address TB. Prior to this administration, budget cuts to the BTBC halved the City's contribution to TB control, from \$16.43M in 2007 (adjusted for inflation) to just \$8.59 million last year. With similar cuts at the state and federal level, the BTBC's funding per case has decreased by 56%. We are in danger of repeating history: budget cuts in the 1970s-1980s dismantled the TB response, contributing to a drug-resistant TB outbreak that cost \$1 billion to control.

We are disappointed in your lack of leadership regarding the growing TB crisis. We understand from the City Council Executive Budget Hearing on Health last week that your administration has not committed any new funding to DOHMH for TB, and that while DOHMH has identified modest internal resources to restore key staff positions, support is lacking to mount a robust response to outpace the epidemic, which would require funding community organizations to conduct, prevent and identify TB early.

We reiterate our unanswered requests to ensure a TB response commensurate to burden by increasing the DOHMH BTBC budget by \$6.3 million to \$14.89 million.

We request you to meet urgently with community groups to address this issue, prior to the City budget completion. We will be happy to convene relevant community partners. Please indicate your earliest availability to Safiq.Khimani@treatmentactiongroup.org.

We look forward to your response and your leadership,



Erica Lessem, Deputy Executive Director – TB
Treatment Action Group