

To: Mayor Bill de Blasio, New York City  
Speaker Corey Johnson, New York City Council  
Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Council Member Inez Barron, Member of the Committee on Health  
Council Member Margaret Chin, co-Vice Chair of the Black, Latino/a, and Asian Caucus  
Council Member Robert E. Cornegy Jr.  
Council Member Laurie Cumbo  
Council Member Daniel Dromm  
Council Member Rafael L. Espinal Jr.  
Council Member Mathieu Eugene, Member of the Committee on Health  
Council Member Vanessa Gibson  
Council Member Rory I. Lancman  
Council Member Mark Levine, Chair of the Committee on Health  
Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the Committee on Immigration  
Council Member Francisco Moya  
Council Member Keith Powers, Member of the Committee on Health  
Council Member Carlina Rivera, Chair of Committee on Hospitals  
Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez  
Council Member Deborah Rose  
Comptroller Scott Stringer  
Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz  
Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams  
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer  
Queens Borough President Melinda Katz  
Public Advocate Letitia James

CC: Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Herminia Palacio  
Commissioner Nisha Agarwal, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs  
Louis Cholden-Brown, Deputy Chief of Staff for Legislation, Planning & Budget, New York City Council

March 19, 2018

**Open letter re: Urgent need to restore and increase funding for New York's TB response**

Dear Mayor de Blasio, City Council Speaker and Members, Borough Presidents, Comptroller, and Public Advocate,

As your constituents, we write to thank you for this administration's preservation of funding for New York's response to tuberculosis (TB), and to appeal urgently for your support for increased resources to combat this growing infectious public health threat.

When it comes to TB, New York City is a leader—in the best and worst ways. The New York City TB program leads the rest of the country in adopting cutting-edge, cost-

effective ways to prevent, detect, and treat TB. But the City has the third highest TB case rate of all U.S. reporting areas, according to 2016 CDC data. Preliminary 2017 trend data indicate not only an increase in TB incidence, but a rise in drug-resistant TB, which is even more difficult and costly to diagnose and treat.

Such figures are unfortunately unsurprising when one considers the paucity of resources committed to the TB response in New York City. Prior to this administration's tenure, a history of budget cuts to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Bureau of TB Control (BTBC) more than halved the City's contribution to TB control, from \$16.43M in 2007 (adjusted for inflation) to just \$8.59 million last year.

Because of similar cuts at the state and federal level, the BTBC's total funding has been reduced by half in the last ten years. And because of increasing case rates, funding per case of TB has decreased by over 56%. As a result, clinics have been shuttered, those that are open are in disrepair, and critical positions remain unstaffed. The immigrant communities that many of us represent are disproportionately affected.

Similarly short-sighted budget reductions in the late 1980s dismantled the public health response to TB, contributing to a massive outbreak of drug-resistant TB in New York City that cost over \$1 billion to control. Let's not repeat history.

**We ask you to ensure that the TB response is adequately funded and critical services restored by increasing New York City funding to the DOHMH BTBC in this year's budget to \$14.89 million** (a \$6.3 million dollar increase over last year). We appreciate that—while ultimately the obligation of the locality—addressing TB is a shared responsibility, and we are making similar (but proportionally higher) requests at the state and federal levels.

We look forward to your leadership in ensuring an appropriate budget for a robust TB response in New York City. Please direct any questions and your response to Safiqa Khimani at [Safiqa.Khimani@treatmentactiongroup.org](mailto:Safiqa.Khimani@treatmentactiongroup.org).

#### **Organizational endorsements**

**Academy of Medical & Public Health Services**, Brooklyn, NY

**African Services Committee**, New York, NY

**Apicha Community Health Center**, New York, NY

**Boom! Health**, Bronx, NY

**Callen-Lorde Community Health Center**, New York, NY

**Care for the Homeless**, New York

**End AIDS Now**, New York, NY

**Exponents Inc.**, New York

**Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies**, New York, NY

**GMHC**, New York, NY

*(continued)*

Hispanic Federation, U.S.  
Housing Works, New York  
Latino Commission on AIDS, New York  
Legal Action Center, New York City, State, and U.S.  
Mexican Coalition, Bronx, NY  
National TB Controllers Association, U.S.  
New York-Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital, New York, NY  
The New York Immigration Coalition, New York  
Treatment Action Group, New York, NY  
Unity Fellowship of Christ Church NYC, Harlem, NY

**Individual endorsements** *institutions noted for affiliation purposes only*

Maha Attieh, Arab American Family Support Center, Brooklyn, NY  
Nicole Blonder, Health Coach, Brooklyn, NY  
Joy Episalla, Treatment Action Group, New York, NY  
Joel D. Ernst, MD, New York University School of Medicine, Bellevue Hospital Center,  
New York, NY  
Mike Frick, Treatment Action Group, Brooklyn NY  
Gerald Friedland, Professor of Medicine, Epidemiology and Public Health, Yale School  
of Medicine, New Haven, CT  
Annette Gaudino, Treatment Action Group – HCV advocate, Bronx, NY  
Jill F. Greenberg, MPH, Health Advocate, New York, NY  
Mark Harrington, Treatment Action Group, New York, NY  
Yael Hirsch-Moverman, ICAP, Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University,  
New York, NY  
Tiffany Hsu, Health Advocate, New York, NY  
Safiqa Khimani, Treatment Action Group, Brooklyn, NY  
Eunhye Kim, Korean Community Services, New York, NY  
Erica Lessem, Treatment Action Group, Brooklyn, NY  
Timothy Lunceford-Stevens, Healthcare advocate, New York, NY  
Suraj Madoori, Treatment Action Group, New York, NY  
Luis Mares, Latino Commission on AIDS, Astoria, Queens, NY  
Barun Mathema, TB researcher, New York, NY  
Lindsay McKenna, Treatment Action Group, Brooklyn, NY  
Robert Monteleone, AIDS activist, New York, NY  
Laura Moya, HIV tester and counselor, Iris House, New York, NY  
Ann E. Rubin, Rise & Resist, Brooklyn, NY  
Marco Salerno, Columbia University, New York, NY  
Eric Sawyer, Cofounder of Act up New York and Housing Works, New York, NY  
Sangey Tashi, Tibetan Community Health Network, New York, NY  
Donna Hope Wegener, National Tuberculosis Controllers Association (NTCA)