



Testimony to the New York Senate & Assembly Joint Higher Education Budget Hearing

Submitted by

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On behalf of The Business Council of New York State, Inc. and our more than 2,300 members – businesses large and small across the state – I wish to submit these comments into the record as part of this joint committee’s hearing on the FY 2021-22 state budget. As the state’s largest statewide employer advocacy organization, we often address issues impacting the state’s economic competitiveness, including business costs driven by state policy actions. Today we wish to discuss an issue that undoubtedly impacts every employer and every New Yorker, access to vaccinations.

We were pleased to see the Governor’s inclusion of the provisions in S.2507/A 3007 Budget (Health Mental Hygiene Budget), Part P (page 50 lines 4-41 amending Section 6801 of the education law and subdivision 7 of Section 6527 of the education law (similar to A.1221 Paulin/S.2024 May), which would expand the types of vaccines that pharmacists and certified nurse practitioners can administer to adults to include all CDC-recommended vaccines. This bill aligns New York with the laws of 48 other states where pharmacists can administer all CDC-adult recommended vaccines. We strongly support the inclusion of this provision in the final budget for the following reasons.

As we continue living through a pandemic caused by a novel virus, we are soberly reminded that vaccines are one of the most important tools for the protection of public health. We are thankful to finally have vaccinations for the COVID-19 virus and we are all invested in getting as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. This job is made easier with the ability to utilize the expertise of pharmacists in giving vaccinations to the public. This fact is as true now as it will be in the future, whether we are facing another crisis or simply trying to ensure that all New Yorkers are properly immunized for a myriad of diseases. Nobody should be left out of vaccinations for lack of access.

Data continues to mount in New York that indicates that access to vaccinations is not equal geographically and is unequal based on race. While we are certain that there are many factors at play, we know that there are many adults who do not regularly visit a primary care physician but are frequently in and out of pharmacies, putting them in direct contact with over 14,000 licensed pharmacists, ready to administer immunizations. The New York Department of Health reports that pharmacists gave almost 2 million vaccines in 2018-19, up from nearly 1.6 million in the prior year. It makes sense that when we make it more convenient for New Yorkers to receive immunizations, they will do just that. Such expanded access to New York’s underserved communities will lead to continued growth in adult immunization.

My primary responsibility is to New York’s employers. Employers, as premium payers, appreciate any measure that serves to increase overall health and consequently reduce healthcare costs. They also recognize the benefits of losing less productivity to illness. It isn’t often in policymaking that we come across a piece of legislation that is simply a win-win. This budget provision is an example of that, in that it expands access to underserved communities, promotes public health, saves healthcare dollars and increases business productivity.

This budget provision serves, first and foremost, to expand access to vaccinations in underserved communities. We are all far too aware now how vital this access is to our collective health, both physical and economic. We mustn’t miss this opportunity to help ensure access for all New Yorkers to life-saving vaccines. It is for these reasons that The Business Council urges the inclusion of this provisions in the final budget.

Thank you.