



The Office of University Advancement
Nexus Building – Suite 200
1 South Avenue
Garden City, NY 11530-0701

**2021 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Health
New York State 2021-2022 Executive Budget Proposal
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Submitted by:

Maggie Yoon Grafer, B.S. '98, M.A.'08

Associate Vice President of External Relations & University Advancement University Advancement

Reyna Machado, MA, MBA,

Director, Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program

Adelphi University has a longstanding record of responding to needs in the community, with roots going back to its founding in 1863. In 1980, the first post mastectomy group began at Adelphi's School of Social Work. The women in the support group, all of whom felt extremely isolated when they were diagnosed, found comfort in sharing their fears, questions and experiences among others who were experiencing the same feelings. They decided they wanted to reach out to other women facing breast cancer too.

At a time in history when breast cancer was not even discussed publicly these group members, along with staff, faculty, and interns at Adelphi, developed the "Woman-to-Woman Hotline." By 1990, thanks to funding provided by New York State, the hotline expanded to cover all the state. Today, we have the oldest breast cancer hotline in the country staffed by professionally trained and supervised volunteers; most are breast cancer survivors.

For over 40 years, the Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program has been providing community outreach, licensed social work services (in English and Spanish) including individual and group counseling, educational forums, health referrals including COVID-19 testing and community resources and hope to thousands of New Yorkers diagnosed with breast cancer. All our services are free and confidential.

Our program, like many non-profits, has an uncertain financial future due to the loss of state funding in 2020 and the impact of COVID-19, which may result in the elimination of our comprehensive, professional, and often life-saving services. Since April 2020, our program has lost over 40% of our funding and the financial loss has been devastating in our ability to serve those in need.

Despite having a five-year contract (2017-2022) with the NYS Department of Health for funding in the amount of \$283,300 annually, it was not renewed in the 2020-21 state budget, nor has it been advanced in the Governor's 2021-22 Executive Budget Proposal.

This funding accounts for over 30% of our overall budget. Due to COVID-19, the program also lost additional philanthropic and community funding:

- In May 2020, funding from a long-term partner, Susan G. Komen Greater NYC was not renewed as they ceased operations; and
- The 2020 LI2Day Walk, of which we were a founding participant with a team who fundraised \$25,000 annually, also ceased operations.

While we know COVID-19's impact across the world and the breast cancer community in New York has been devastating, we cannot hide our disappointment that the Governor's 2021-22 Executive Budget Proposal omitted this funding once again, even though the state signed a five-year contract with the program.

The pandemic has contributed to a significant reduction in breast cancer screenings and delays in follow-up appointments in the Breast Cancer community, especially in our underserved communities, where it is crucial that our program's services continue to be available.

Nevertheless, we have stived to support patients with breast cancer, and COVID-19, including many who have lost their jobs, health insurance, and are facing staggering difficulties due to the pandemic. Our public health and licensed social workers help to ensure that barriers do not interfere with a patient's ability in receiving life-saving treatments.

In 2020, during COVID-19, the Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program has:

- Referred **205** individuals for free or low-cost mammography screening through the New York State Cancer Services Program;
- Responded to over **519** hotline calls to New Yorkers affected by breast cancer;
- Provided over **235** English language counseling services to over **70** clients;
- Provided over **930** bilingual counseling sessions to **265** underserved women diagnosed at area hospitals;
- Educated over **4,300** people via breast and public health workshops, including Spanish speaking and medically underserved women of color, and;
- Received over **17,241** visits to the web site with our most popular pages including staff contact information, educational forums, and Paths to Wellness workshops.

Unfortunately, our program does not have operating reserves to keep up these services without state assistance.

In response to these funding losses, we have submitted over twenty grant applications, implemented cost-savings strategies, and organized seven fundraising efforts. Adelphi University is also in a difficult position, but they waived indirect costs. While we have support from our Advisory Board, volunteers and community partners, our program's needs exceed these resources.

We are at a critical point in the Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program's history. Now, more than ever, our program has an essential role to play in providing licensed social work services for the breast cancer community. To sustain our critical programs, we need New York State funding to underwrite these complimentary services.

We ask the State of New York to honor its funding obligation under NYS Department of Health Contract #C32977GG, and to provide current and future funding to keep this program operating for breast cancer patients and their families.

Patient Vignette

Now, more than ever, our team utilizes relationships with local resources and community organizations to support patients. Our program successfully provided assistance to the following client:

Ms. DFM is a 47-year-old mother of three, diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer in March 2020. Ms. DFM began aggressive chemotherapy shortly after her diagnosis and is awaiting its completion to have surgery. Ms. DFM's chemotherapy treatment has been difficult, and she has not been able to return to work. Due to her loss of income and her husband's reduced hours due to the pandemic, the family has faced incredible economic difficulties. The bilingual social work team conducted a thorough intake to help determine her immediate needs, addressing safety and level of urgency. The team determined that food insecurity was a concern and was able to provide the patient with Stop and Shop food cards to purchase fresh food. The team also referred the family to the Health and Wellness Council of Long Island, and they were able to assist the client's spouse secure unemployment benefits. During one of her sessions with our Social Worker, the patient also shared that she was depressed due to hair loss. The team helped Ms. DFM obtain a wig through Wigs & Wishes, dramatically impacting her self-esteem and confidence. The patient navigation she received provided her the ability to address her multifaceted needs, allowing her to focus on her treatment and avoiding and preventing a lapse in her medical care due to insurmountable barriers.

Thank you for your consideration.