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THE KOREAN COMMUNITY  
SERVICES OF METROPOLITAN  
NEW YORK, INC.

뉴욕한인봉사센터  
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**Testimony for the New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
Health Budget Committee Hearing  
February 4, 2022**

**Testimony of Sunwoo Ji, Project Coordinator  
The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)**

My name is Sunwoo Ji, and I am a Project Coordinator at the Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS). I would like to first thank the Committee on Finance for giving us the opportunity to share testimony.

KCS is a 48-year-old nonprofit, the first social services organization in New York serving the Korean-American population, as well as the wider immigrant community. KCS continues to operate under the mission of helping immigrants fully integrate into society and overcome any economic, health and social barriers so that they become independent and thriving members of the community. Today, KCS serves an average of 1,300 individuals every day through its six program sites, covering areas of immigration, aging, senior job training, mental health, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and public health.

As the only Korean American CBO in NYC offering the cancer service program - Women Informed, Screened, and Empowered (WISE) - provides free breast cancer screening services, in-person education & counseling, and on-site referral for free cervical & colorectal cancer resources for eligible women. KCS launched WISE program to provide culturally and linguistically competent healthcare coordination and patient navigation services. Specifically, discretionary funding is utilizing for two major components: service/unit costs, namely, outreach event and supporting a project coordinator and patient navigator.

NYC residents from minority, immigrant, or undocumented backgrounds are heavily impacted by low-income status (17.3% of households below FPL) and low-rates of health insurance coverage (22% of non-citizens are uninsured). Lack of access-to-care or health coverage has been linked to extremely low-rates of screening uptake, putting women from these communities at an even greater risk of BC (Breast Cancer) and CRC (Colorectal Cancer). These disparities are exacerbated by high-rates of limited English proficiency, lack of awareness surrounding both cancers, and federal policies such as the new Public Charge rules, which discourages utilization of public benefits such as healthcare. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only disproportionately impacted vulnerable immigrant communities of NYC but has overwhelmed our healthcare system further restricting minority women from seeking

<b>KCS Main Office Adult Daycare   Immigration   ESOL</b>	<b>Corona Senior Center</b>	<b>Flushing Senior Center</b>	<b>Public Health and Research Center   Workforce Development</b>	<b>Brooklyn Project</b>	<b>Mental Health Clinic</b>
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recommended regular screenings and receiving treatment. Notably, we have observed a significant increase in requests from uninsured community members for BC and CRC screenings since the pandemic. Given that we continue to see a growing number of clients who need assistance with their health care, it is clear that the support for these services will be even more important from now on, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemics.

To highlight the need for high quality, culturally-adapt services, I would like to share my client’s story with you. In early of 2021, Ms. Sohn reached out to us for the breast cancer check-up. Because she didn't have any insurance, she had trouble getting tests or seeing a doctor, even though she had some symptoms on her breast. Coincidentally, she found out about our WISE program through a newspaper, she received free mammography and additional exams through KCS’ cancer service program, and was able to detect early stages of cancer in her left breast. After all the examination, she underwent surgery to remove the tumor and is currently receiving necessary treatment at a hospital cooperating with KCS.

If support is suspended or budgets are not enough, many vulnerable women in NYC will face serious health challenges due to lack of regular checkups and awareness. Most of them already face disproportionate socio-economic inequalities, so the challenges and difficulties will pose a greater threat to them. Given that early detection is a top priority for cancer treatment, continuing our cancer service program could serve as a sign of hope for the crisis we are all facing today, as well as reducing women's mortality from cancer.

We would like to thank the City Council’s commitment to health equity for all New Yorkers, and ask for the continued support in reducing various health disparities in NYC’s immigrant communities. Community-Based Organizations such as KCS have longstanding ties with the community, the trust of community members, and an acute knowledge of the needs of the community. Therefore, CBOs are well positioned to deliver much needed services to the community. We are all in this together and with your leadership, I am confident that we will emerge stronger, more empathetic, and more unified than ever before.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sunwoo Ji  
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The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)

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