



Testimony on the Health and Medicaid Budget for State Fiscal Year 2026-27

Public Health Solutions appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on the New York State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026-27 Executive Budget. Public Health Solutions (PHS) is the largest public health nonprofit serving New York City (NYC). For more than 65 years, our mission has been simple: help New Yorkers live healthier lives and build stronger communities. We do this by serving underserved families directly, partnering with community-based organizations, and closing the gap between healthcare and the community services people depend on every day.

We focus on the issues that matter most—food insecurity and nutrition, access to health insurance, maternal and child health, tobacco control, and HIV/AIDS prevention. As health disparities across New York continue to widen, Public Health Solutions exists to change that trajectory and ensure New Yorkers and their families have the support they need to achieve optimal health and reach their full potential.

Maternal and Child Health

Nurse Family Partnership and other Home Visiting Programs:

PHS' Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), located in Queens and Staten Island, is a nationally recognized, evidence-based nurse home-visiting program for high-risk, low-income mothers, infants, and families. NFP nurses provide home visiting support from pregnancy until the child turns two years old, helping mothers engage in preventive health practices, promote positive parent-child attachment and child development, and improve women's economic self-sufficiency. PHS' NFP serves close to 300 families per year. PHS is also a provider of Healthy Families under funding from OCFS in Queens and Brooklyn neighborhoods.

NFP is funded in part through a \$3 million annual base appropriation from the Department of Health. This appropriation has been level funded for several years, while programs and staffing costs continue to rise, particularly in NYC.

In addition, we are grateful the Legislature traditionally adds funding for NFP, and providers have come to rely on this add-on. However, that funding has varied in recent years, making it difficult to effectively plan for continued service delivery. We encourage the Senate and Assembly to support the Executive budget appropriation and provide additional funding for the NFP.

Recommendations:

- Support \$3 million Executive Budget Appropriation for NFP and provide an additional \$1 million legislative add-on;
- Support Executive Budget proposal to allocate \$1.8 million in level funding for Home Visiting Program (which supports the Healthy Families NY program)

Perinatal Infant Community Health Collaborative (PICHC):

PHS' Perinatal Infant Community Health Collaborative (PICHC), known as Queens Global Families, works to improve health outcomes for vulnerable women and their families before, during and after pregnancy. Community Health Workers (CHWs) provide individual and group health education in a 'stress-free zone' approach, case management, risk screening, and home-visiting, and they connect families to clinical and community-based services. PICHC also coordinates a network of local health, social service, and community providers that increases access, reduces gaps in services, and addresses community challenges, which affect the health and well-being of families. PHS' PICHC serves more than 250 families throughout the borough of Queens each year and co-facilitates the Queens Birth Justice Hub.

Beginning in 2022-2023, recognizing the need to shore up the safety net workforce, New York State reinstated annual human services cost of living adjustments (COLAs), now referred to as Targeted Inflationary Increases (TII) and implemented the Healthcare Worker Bonus Program (HWB). However, these initiatives left behind most of the community-based public health workforce employed by CBOs, including PICHC Community Health Workers, because they did not meet the eligibility requirements for either program. This oversight left out the trusted frontline workforce best equipped at providing critical health education and reaching, engaging and supporting the most marginalized communities in accessing healthcare, social services, and benefits. Previously, those workers employed by programs funded by the Department of Health (DOH) were eligible to receive COLAs.

Recommendations:

- Support \$1.8 million level funding Executive Budget Appropriation for the PICHC;
- Support Executive Budget proposal for \$690,000 in funding to reduce infant mortality;
- Restore the TII for all nonprofit human service contracts – including all State Department of Health (DOH) contracts – as proposed in legislation (A.4037) introduced by Assemblyman Hevesi;
- Provide an annual human services TII of 2.7% for DOH programs for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

Maternal Mortality:

New York State continues to face a high rate of maternal deaths. This is especially true for Black, African American mothers. Black, non-Hispanic women are five times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women. In NYC, the disparities are even more profound: Black women are six times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related complication than White women. The top causes of maternal death in NYC are mental

health (inclusive of suicide and substance abuse), hemorrhage, cardiovascular conditions, and embolism. Risk factors are obesity, economic and cultural barriers, and institutional racism and implicit bias in healthcare centers. CHWs such as those funded under PICHC, and home visiting programs are critical in preventing pregnancy-related death and educating consumers about their rights.

Recommendations:

- Support \$4 million in level funding Executive Budget Appropriation for Maternal Mortality; and
- Support the Executive Budget proposal for \$690,000 in funding to reduce infant mortality.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity affects approximately one million children in New York State alone. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides a Federal grant from the USDA to New York State for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as Food Stamps, helps eligible community members to purchase the food they need from most grocery stores and other approved food outlets.

Extensive research has found WIC and SNAP to be cost-effective investments that improve the nutrition and health of low-income families. Women who participate in WIC give birth to healthier babies, children participating in WIC have lower risk of obesity, and children whose mothers participated in WIC while pregnant show improved mental development. SNAP reduces poverty by 14-16% and is considered one of the nation's most effective anti-poverty programs for low-income families with children. Together, these services help lift families out of poverty, improve birth outcomes, and benefit childhood health and academic performance.

WIC:

PHS is the largest WIC provider in the State, now serving nearly 30,000 individuals at nine Neighborhood WIC sites in high-need areas of Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. PHS also serves as the main manager of WIC vendors, ensuring more than 1,700 food stores that accept WIC checks offer and keep adequate stock of WIC-approved food package items. Our caseload increased dramatically between 2022 and 2024, as WIC is a high-impact program available to newly arrived migrant families. However, despite growth in caseload throughout the city, and the complexity of serving a large cohort of people in temporary shelters, WIC funding has not increased, and no coordination mechanisms were created. The Governor recognized the need to support WIC in her State of the State address, and we strongly hope this will materialize through additional funding to local WIC agencies.

Beginning in 2022-2023, recognizing the need to shore up the safety net workforce, New York State reinstated annual human services cost of living adjustments (COLAs), now referred to as Targeted Inflationary Increases (TII) and implemented the Healthcare Worker Bonus Program (HWB). However, these initiatives left behind most of the public health workforce employed by CBOs, including the WIC program, because they did not meet the eligibility requirements for either program. This oversight left out the trusted frontline workforce best equipped at reaching, engaging and supporting the most marginalized communities in accessing healthcare, social services, and benefits. Previously, those workers employed by programs funded by the Department of Health (DOH) were eligible to receive COLAs.

Recommendations:

- Support the Executive Budget Appropriation of \$26.4 million in State support for the WIC program; and
- Provide an additional \$30 million in State Supplemental Funds to stabilize local operations so WIC can serve all eligible families seeking services.
- Restore the TII for all nonprofit human service contracts – including all State Department of Health (DOH) contracts – as proposed in legislation (A.4037) introduced Assemblyman Hevesi; and
- Provide an annual human services TII of 2.7% for Fiscal Year 2026-2027

SNAP:

With 13 years of experience delivering SNAP enrollment assistance across New York City, PHS operates a trusted, community-embedded network of SNAP enrollers serving some of the city's most food-insecure neighborhoods, including East Harlem, the Bronx, Jamaica/Southeast Queens, Corona/Elmhurst, Central Queens, and Flatbush/Southern Brooklyn. In 2025, PHS enrolled nearly 5,000 households, translating operational expertise into \$1.9 million in SNAP benefits, reducing application errors, and keeping enrollment timelines within 30 days.

PHS welcomes the Executive Budget's proposal to enhance EBT card protections through CHIP-enabled technology to combat the growing problem of SNAP skimming. While we appreciate Governor Hochul's investments in SNAP, we are concerned about continuity of care for recipients following the early termination of the Targeted SNAP Outreach IV (T-SNAP IV) contract, now set to end on September 30, 2026.

We greatly appreciate the State's efforts with the just released Nutrition Navigator–Direct Services RFP; however, the competitive structure creates significant uncertainty, including a requirement that awardees have 75% of annual expenses funded upfront. The complex funding methodology raises concerns that total funding for existing providers may be reduced at a time when organizations must focus on helping the public navigate major eligibility and workforce requirement changes. Compressed timelines following federal program terminations increase the risk of service gaps if providers are not awarded new contracts. We urge the State to provide stopgap funding to ensure continuity of services and meet increased demand from SNAP participants.

Recommendations:

- Provide PHS with \$115,000 to sustain PHS's SNAP enrollment assistance – an essential, trusted infrastructure in New York's most food-insecure communities through the end of 2026.
- Support the Executive Budget Appropriations of \$42 million in the Office for the Aging and, \$500 million in the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in State support for SNAP, along with \$70 million to pay federal penalties for SNAP;
- Support the Executive Budget proposal of \$23.3 million to enhance EBT protections by implementing CHIP-enabled technology to prevent theft of benefits.
- Provide an annual human services TII of 2.7 % for Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Tobacco Control

PHS operates the NYC Smoke-Free program, which works to protect the health of New Yorkers through tobacco control policy, advocacy, and education. The program supports evidence-based, policy-driven, and cost-effective approaches that decrease youth tobacco use, motivate adult smokers to quit, and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke. We partner with community members, legislators, and health advocates to support local efforts to end the devastating tobacco epidemic throughout NYC, where close to one million residents smoke. We are thankful the Governor ensured that the NYS Bureau of Tobacco Control continued to operate despite substantial losses of Federal Funding.

Recommendations:

- Support the Executive Budget proposal for tobacco-related programs; It provides a total of \$2.1 million for tobacco enforcement and education, and \$40.6 million for the tobacco use prevention and control programs,

Health Insurance

For over 20 years, our health insurance enrollment programs - funded by the New York State Department of Health - have been helping New Yorkers to overcome these barriers by providing step-by-step assistance to clients applying for health coverage. Our Navigator program assists individuals and families to apply through the NY State of Health Marketplace, while our Facilitated Enrollment for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (FE-ABD) program assists individuals aged 65 years or older, and those living with blindness and disabilities to submit applications to the Human Resources Administration. Together, our programs help an estimated 20,000 individuals to apply for free or low-cost health insurance coverage annually and have contributed to a significant decline in the uninsured rate in New York. Our team played a significant role in supporting the State's goal of recertifying millions of New Yorkers for Medicaid coverage through the unwinding of the continuous coverage requirement. We will continue to help New Yorkers navigate the changes in eligibility requirements that are unfolding, to ensure that as many individuals as possible retain coverage.

PHS' enrollers speak the language of the community they serve and are trained to provide unbiased in-person and telephonic assistance, walking clients through the entire process, including helping them to understand health coverage options and find the right plan, gathering documents and required

information, following-up on application outcomes, and helping them renew their coverage annually. We serve all 5 NYC boroughs, Long Island (Navigator program only), and Westchester and Rockland County (FE-ABD program only).

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