

My name is Bremy Albuquerque. I obtained my PhD in Genetics and Genomics Sciences from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. My lab primarily studies bacteria and viruses circulating NYC, and other regions of the world, to understand how they evolve and cause infectious diseases. For example, as NYC began to shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, our lab was the first to sequence and publish on the first wave of SARS-CoV-2 viruses detected in the city. This contributed important knowledge about the virus at a time when we knew so little about it and so many around us were passing away due to COVID-19. Right now, I continue to use the latest genomic technologies to research how vaccines affect our immune system, and outside of infectious disease also study early stages of craniofacial development to better understand birth defects such as craniosynostosis.

I and other members from my lab have always been driven in our research knowing that this work can contribute to the development of treatments or preventative measures that help vulnerable patients in our society. Our ability to perform this work, however, is being threatened by instability in federal research funding. For example, cuts in our NIH grants could interrupt our work to understand bacteria and viruses that cause thousands of deaths a year and billions of dollars in healthcare costs, and could prevent us from detecting emerging pathogens early before they have a chance to spread more widely in our communities.

Beyond its impact on public health, biomedical research is a major economic driver for New York. Research funding supports thousands of high-skilled jobs — from scientists and technicians to administrative and facilities staff — and promotes partnerships with local businesses, biotech startups, and hospitals. It attracts federal dollars into our state and generates broader economic activity that benefits our community. When research funding is cut, it does not only slow scientific progress; it also weakens local economies, reduces job stability, and threatens New York's position as a global leader in innovation.

As an elected leader in our union, I have already seen how cuts to federal research funding have affected our research workers, with layoffs and termination of projects that had been ongoing for years. Federal cuts are making it more difficult to negotiate better working conditions, as our employer will use these cuts to justify limiting or even removing benefits that we won in our first contract.

Research funding from New York State would be imperative to make sure that research which contributes to the health and safety of New York residents continues uninterrupted, and that New York state continues to be a research hub that draws in the best talent in the world. For these reasons, I ask that you please do all you can to support the inclusion of research funding in the New York State budget.