

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR ADAMS COMMITS TO MAKING NEW YORK CITY FUTURE OF
WOMEN'S HEALTH**

*To Help Undo Decades of Systemic Inequity That Have Affected Women's Health, Mayor Adams
Outlines Plans to Create Model for Future of Women's Health in New York City*

*Immediate Commitments Include Relaunching of a Sexual Education Task Force in All City
Schools, Tracking of Health Problems That Affect Women Most, Convening Thought Leaders to
Shape Next Steps*

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams today outlined his vision for a ‘New York City Women’s Health Agenda’ aimed at dismantling decades of systemic inequity that have negatively impacted the health of women across the five boroughs. Joined by several health care leaders of his administration, Mayor Adams acknowledged the long-standing, persistent problems that plague women's health care in a live address, and shared plans and ideas to close the gaps caused by long-standing structural inequities, including lack of access to care, lack of inclusion, and lack of innovation.

“For too long health and health care has been centered around men, but that changes today,” said **Mayor Adams**. “We have been standing on the sidelines of women’s health for too long, and I have personally seen firsthand how the health system is letting our women down. It is long overdue that we break taboos and make New York City a model for the future of women’s health care. We are going to build a city that is here for all women and girls.”

“This agenda will help us, as a city, prioritize and address the health needs of women across the lifespan and elevate the voices of women at every step along the way,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom**. “The work to implement this agenda has already begun and I look forward to continuing to be part of that effort and doing so alongside so many dedicated and accomplished women inside and outside of government.”

Historically, women’s health has been rife with inequities in many areas ranging from disease prevention to maternity care to mental health and management. For example, in New York City, the average maternal mortality rate among Black pregnant people is more than nine times the rate of white pregnant people. Sadly, many of these deaths of Black people were preventable.

Mayor Adams' vision to create a model for the future of women's health in New York City includes:

- **Relaunching the Sexual Education Task Force:** Convened by the New York City Commission on Gender Equity, in partnership with the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and the New York City Mayor's Office of Equity, the task force will educate the youngest New Yorkers and create a culture of sexual wellness and inclusivity. Additionally, the task force will work to update and implement 11 recommendations in its [2018 report](#) — including ensuring school staff have basic competencies around inclusivity and respect and that they can also link students to appropriate sexual health resources outside the school setting, as well as increasing broad community support of sexual health education through public awareness campaigns and information sessions. The task force will also provide an annual report of its activities.
- **Immediately Committing to Tracking Rates of Different Diseases:** Diseases tracked would include cancer, mental health conditions, heart disease, and, possibly, additional conditions, as well as life expectancy and other key indicators differentiated by age, race, and additional key factors. The Adams administration will leverage findings to shape the work that city agencies carry out regarding women's health. The city will also report on these indicators in an effort to ensure the tracking of progress regarding the state of women's health in New York City. Additionally, the administration will continue to champion research in this space.
- **Convening a Variety of Thought Leaders to Create a Robust and Comprehensive Women's Health Agenda:** Thought leaders will include experts from different subject matter areas, including research, public health, health care, business, technology, and more, and will come together for a summit during Women's History Month in March.
- **Building on Previous Successes for the City's Workforce:** The city will assemble a committee of experts to build on its past successes already achieved for its workforce, including increasing access to both lactation rooms and paid sick leave for cancer screenings. Work will include examining how to create more menopause-friendly workplaces and promoting access to health services by utilizing WorkWell — the workplace wellness programs specifically created for city employees — as well as other existing avenues. The committee will also look into how the city can achieve or develop accreditations around becoming more health friendly towards women. This effort will make New York City the first city in the nation to begin a framework that is focused on its employees. Recommendations made by this group of experts will additionally inform future work so New York City can become even friendlier to women's health.
- **Expanding Access to Medication Abortion at New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Clinics:** Starting tomorrow, the Morrisania Sexual Health Clinic in the Bronx, DOHMH will begin to provide abortion pills to individuals. Several additional neighborhood DOHMH clinics in Crown Heights (Brooklyn), Central Harlem (Manhattan), and Jamaica (Queens) are scheduled to begin dispensing this medication by the end of the year. New York City Health + Hospitals' (H+H) 11 public hospitals citywide already offer medication abortion.
- **Launching a Provider Education Campaign on Maternal Health:** The campaign will focus on supporting those with hypertension and diabetes and will entail direct outreach to providers in target neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan that experience health and other socioeconomic disparities. The 20-week campaign will launch in the summer of 2023.

- **Launching of a Family-Based Substance Use Disorder Program at H+H:** The substance use disorder program will focus on providing support to those who are pregnant and/or parenting and struggling with addiction, while additionally providing their children with mental health support and other services. The program will integrate family medicine, behavioral health, and addiction medicine across a continuum of care. Concurrently, the program will also address primary care, as well as psychosocial and mental health needs of children. In doing so, this model will support the healthy, long-term development of children affected by parental substance abuse.
- **Committing to Exploring the Expansion of and Access to Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy:** Pelvic floor dysfunction can be caused by pregnancy, a traumatic physical incident, age, menopause, or obesity and can lead to a host of problems, including pain and bowel issues. One in three women will experience a pelvic floor disorder in their lifetime.

All these initiatives build off programs and services launched during Mayor Adams' first year in office, including:

- A [first-of-its-kind Abortion Access Hub that confidentially refers callers from across the country to abortion care providers in New York City](#), as well as connections to additional financial support, transportation, and lodging;
- [A citywide expansion of doula services, expansion of the midwifery initiative, and expansion of a maternal health services program](#); and
- Signing a series of [historic bills to promote education, increase transparency, and expand access to maternal health care](#) for pregnant New Yorkers.

Many women, both in New York City and across the globe, suffer from preventable health conditions and face distinct health challenges. Heart disease continues to be a leading cause of death for women, while breast cancer is the second most common form of cancer for women (after skin cancer) and the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women (after lung cancer). An analysis by DOHMH shows that among women, rates of hypertension are highest among Black women in New York City (41.6 percent) and nationwide (39.9 percent), compared to Latina women (26 percent and 28 percent, respectively), white women (20.6 percent and 25.6 percent, respectively) and Asian women (13 percent and 21.9 percent, respectively). These inequities stem from a range of causes, including medical training and quality of available services, as well as clinical research historically conducted with men and then having subsequent findings incorrectly applied to women.

“This week is a bitter anniversary as we mark what should have been 50 years of protection of reproductive rights through *Roe v. Wade*,” said **DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan**. “Rather than focus on what’s lost, we will put our energy toward making gains for women’s health and mobilizing every sector of our city to this cause. As a husband, father of a daughter, ally, and doctor, my hope is that our city will be a beacon for women’s health now and for generations to come. We don’t have another year to wait.”

“Medicine and public health mirror our society where sexism and racism are normalized and it hurts the health of our city and world,” said **DOHMH Chief Medical Officer Dr. Michelle Morse, deputy commissioner, Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness**. “We cannot simply confront the faults of the past to correct these issues. We must forge ahead with

reparative policies and actions. Today's announcement is one small but important step in that journey."

"I applaud the mayor for shining a spotlight on the need for sensitive, compassionate, and holistic health care for women," said **H+H Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Machel Allen, MD**. "As a woman of color, I am not only a provider of women's health care, I am also a consumer. No matter our race, gender identity, religion, physical or cognitive ability, or body type we are not invisible, and we deserve health care that meets our needs."

"At New York City Health + Hospitals women's health is foundational to the services we provide every day, and today's announcement expands the city's commitment to address the health care needs of those who need it most," said **H+H Chief Women's Health Officer Wendy Wilcox, MD, MPH, MBA, FACOG**. "We will work closely with the city Health Department and all our partners to address the very real barriers that women still face to getting the care they need. The health system proudly provides quality, culturally-responsive health care services to address the gender and racial health care gaps and disparities we know exist at every level."

"I was inspired to do this work by an African-American pediatrician who showed me that medicine is, above all else, about compassion and really seeing and hearing patients," said **Dr. Leslie Hayes, deputy commissioner, DOHMH Division of Family and Child Health**. "Frederick Green, my childhood doctor, made a career journey similar to mine: from private practice rooted in community service to working in government to advocate for children and more equitable care. I am proud to follow in his tradition and to join this administration's efforts to make medicine and health care better for women, children, and families."

"This agenda puts women's health inequities front and center and will lead to inclusive and intersectional strategies that improve health and wellbeing across our city," said **New York City Mayor's Office of Equity Commissioner Sideya Sherman**. "With the launch of the Sexual Education Task Force, we are ensuring young people have the affirming sexual and reproductive health education they need to understand and make informed choices about their bodies."

"Throughout history, health care policies, protocols, and practices have excluded and marginalized cis- and trans-women and, gender non-binary persons resulting in disparities and inequities, which jeopardize their economic security, safety, and overall well-being, particularly for those who are low-income and persons of color," said **New York City Commission on Gender Equity Executive Director Jacqueline M. Ebanks**. "With the launch of the New York City's Women's Health Agenda, we change that trajectory and provide better options for all to protect and improve their health."

"I am thrilled to see Mayor Adams and the city of New York prioritizing the critical issues around women's health," said **DOE Chancellor David C. Banks**. "The majority of our workforce is made up of dedicated women and so many of our students thrive due to the women in their lives. I know that with the focus of the mayor on this issue, we will strengthen our school communities and the future of children in New York City. Furthermore, the children in our schools are our future doctors, nurses, and leaders in medicine, and I am proud of the work the DOE is doing to set our kids and communities up for success."

“I want to thank Mayor Adams for his efforts in addressing these significant inequities that exist in our health care system,” said **U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**. “We have to work at all levels of government to address this very important issue, which is why I introduced bills such as the MOMS Act and the Maternal CARE Act, which work to address the public health care crisis Black mothers face in the U.S. due to deep systemic racial inequities. I will continue to work with all our partners at all levels of government to ensure that every woman receives high-quality health care regardless of race or socioeconomic status.”

“I am pleased to see Mayor Adams take these much-needed steps to dismantle the long-existing health disparities plaguing women throughout our city,” said **New York State Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn**. “As a Black woman and survivor of maternal loss from a health care system that ignored my needs, I’m committed to ending the maternal mortality crisis alongside the Adams administration. Through legislation, including my introduced ‘Mickie’s Law,’ we are ensuring every expectant mother gets the equitable health care treatment they deserve.”

“If we address women’s health in our city, we could save 17,000 lives each year, including an 80% reduction in pregnancy-related deaths,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar**. “The New York City women’s health agenda is the catalyst for reaching these goals. It will end health inequalities among women, especially women of color, by improving access, quality, training, and inclusion in our health care system. Diseases like breast cancer, cervical cancer, osteoporosis, hypertension, and Type 2 diabetes are often avoidable or manageable in women with proper intervention. Now Mayor Adams — who through the power of his own example showed us the ability to prevent and reverse disease — will ensure that all women have the health care they deserve.”

“I commend the mayor on his commitment to women’s health,” said **New York State Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton**. “Maternal health is a top priority for me and I look forward to having a partner in Mayor Adams to combat this issue, along with many others regarding the health and well-being of New York’s women.”

“For far too long our health care system has failed to adequately address the health care of women,” said **New York City Council Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala**. “It’s important that we now begin to take a look at how we can reform our health care system to provide the best care for everyone, regardless of identity.”

“Supporting the city’s efforts outlined in the New York City Women’s Health Agenda is of paramount importance and will focus on dismantling systematic inequity gaps that persist in women’s health care. Women of color are historically disproportionately affected by health challenges and conditions, and we must act now to close the gaps found in research, training and in health care services to give the quality care that all women deserve,” said **New York City Councilmember Julie Menin**.

“Health care is a human right, but for many women, it is challenging to get appropriate, quality care, said **New York City Councilmember Lynn Schulman, chair, Health Committee**. “As a recent breast cancer survivor, I cannot emphasize enough how important this initiative is and

want to thank Mayor Adams for his dedication to the health and well-being of all New Yorkers, and for his focus on the health inequities faced by women, especially women of color.”

“On behalf the Biden-Harris administration, I commend the mayor and his team for their commitment to protecting and expanding reproductive health care access for all New Yorkers,” said **Dr. Dara Kass, regional director for Region 2, U.S. Department Health and Human Services**. “As an emergency physician and mother, I can attest to how many lives will be impacted by these important programs. We are looking forward to continued partnership with New York on this and so many other pressing health care issues.”

“New York City has become the undeniable hub for startups innovating in women's health,” said **Priyanka Jain, co-founder and CEO, Evvy**. “Now, with a city leadership committed to improving access and outcomes, we finally have the opportunity to build the future of women's health care we all deserve. We look forward to partnering with the city and leaders in medicine and research to accelerate innovation and outcomes.”

“A healthier New York City requires intentional investments in reducing health care disparities that systematically disadvantage Black, Latinx, and marginalized communities,” said **Wendy Stark, president and CEO, Planned Parenthood of Greater New York**. “This includes ensuring equal access to sexual and reproductive health services and compassionate abortion care. Now more than ever, these services and programs are critical as we face mounting threats to our bodily autonomy and basic human rights. Planned Parenthood of Greater New York applauds the mayor and his team for centering this work and looks forward to continuing its longstanding partnership with the city.”

“New York City’s entire hospital community is deeply committed to ending longstanding women’s health inequities and has already made many positive strides in pursuit of that goal,” said **Lloyd C. Bishop, senior vice president and executive director, Center on Community Health Equity Policy and Services, Greater New York Hospital Association**. “But there’s more work to be done. We applaud Mayor Adams for his leadership and vision, and we look forward to partnering with his administration on this important issue.”

“The Mothership is honored to be serving as part of Mayor Adam’s Citywide Doula Initiative, working to protect and uphold respectful birthing care as a human right for Black and Brown families in Harlem, Inwood, and Washington Heights,” said **Miranda Padilla, founder, The Mothership**. “Racial health inequities stem from deep rooted systemic racism. Accessible doula care for all is a step forward in the fight for reproductive justice. We at The Mothership are grateful to be able to do the work in our community, treating childbirth as the sacred, transformative, healing, physiological process that it is, while challenging the status quo and reproductive health systems in place.”

“We are in a part of the world that values rugged individualism, and yet the way most individuals thrive is by being in strong communities,” said **Coleen Stevens Porché, executive director, Power of Two NYC**. “For hundreds of years, people of African ancestry have lived by the adage, ‘it takes a village to raise children,’ but many women often feel as if they are the sole members of the community of child rearers. Parenting is both rewarding and hard work, and no one tells you that or can adequately prepare you for it. Since we know the personal, economic, physical, mental, and emotional toll it can take, we ought to do everything possible to remove

barriers, address inequity, and ensure that women get the support they need and that will make them and their families thrive.”

“The Bronx has the highest rates of maternal morbidity in New York City along with highest rates of infant mortality,” said **Paulette Zalduondo Henriquez, executive director, Bronx Health Link**. “We are grateful to Mayor Adams for supporting more women of color. The Bronx Health Link looks forward to ongoing collaboration with Mayor Adams and our responsive historic Borough President Vanessa Gibson who has made funding available while at the New York City Council to tackle this problem which is literally a matter of life or death.”

“The Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness applauds Mayor Adams for prioritizing women’s health and wellness and ensuring women have access to needed reproductive health services throughout the entire city,” said **Adrienne Abbate, executive director, Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness**. “We are eager to partner with his administration to address the systemic issues that contribute to poor maternal and infant outcomes for New York City’s most marginalized communities.”

“New York City can only be as strong as the health of the millions of women and girls who live and work here and make this place the ever-resilient and thriving urban center we are. I am very pleased to see the administration taking steps to prioritize the health, wellbeing and reproductive autonomy of our women and girls, including expanding the accessibility of medication abortion across all boroughs, and relaunching the city’s Sexual Education Task Force,” said **Dr. Herminia Palacio, former New York City deputy mayor for health and human services; and current president and CEO, The Guttmacher Institute**.

“Mama Glow is proud to work with the Mayor's Office and the city of New York to address the health care system's inequities impacting Black and Brown birthing people by advancing innovative policies and programs like the Citywide Doula Initiative (CDI),” said **Latham Thomas, founder, Mama Glow and the Mama Glow Foundation**. “The CDI serves as a model for what other metropolitan cities nationwide could embrace and replicate to address decades-long systemic inequalities for marginalized people and enable real change for womxn's reproductive rights.”

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