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Hon. Bill de Blasio  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

May 1, 2021

**Re: Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget Priorities**

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

I am writing to respectfully request that New York City renew its commitment to reducing cancer death rates and reducing tobacco use. To achieve these goals, the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget should maintain its current commitment of \$1.6 Million to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Cancer Prevention and Control Program and maintain its current commitment of \$7.2 Million in funding to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Tobacco Control Program.

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has upended lives and the economy. But as this virus grips the nation, cancer is ever-present; 1 in 2 men and 1 in 3 women in the United States will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. On average 40,126 new cancer cases and 12,453 cancer deaths occurred in New York City annually between 2012-2016 according to the New York State Cancer Registry.

Cancer patients have long faced significant barriers to accessing care. COVID-19 has magnified these barriers, with 46% of cancer patients and survivors reporting a change in their ability to pay for care due to the pandemic, and 79% experiencing delays in active treatment.

The pandemic has also shone a spotlight on health disparities across populations. Individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to be uninsured, increasing the likelihood they will be diagnosed with advanced cancer. The 5-year relative survival rate is lower in Blacks than in Whites for every stage of diagnosis in the four most common cancer sites.

While policymakers are addressing acute needs related to COVID-19, we need you to renew your commitment to the fight against cancer.

## **Prevention and Early Detection**

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Cancer Prevention and Control Program leads efforts in New York City to ensure that all men and women who lack health insurance – have access to free cancer screening for breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate cancer. Detected early, these cancers are more easily treated. Failing to have these cancers detected early can lead to deadly consequences.

These efforts have never been more important to the health of New Yorkers. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn have led to loss of health coverage among low-income New Yorkers. According to the Community Services Society, 22 percent of low-income New Yorkers who lost employment income in their household due to COVID-19 said that they or someone in their household lacked health insurance coverage since the start of the pandemic, double the share of those who did not experience wage or job loss (11 percent).<sup>1</sup>

### **Budget recommendation #1:**

- New York City should renew its commitment to reducing cancer death rates by maintaining its current commitment of \$1.6 Million in 2021-2022 to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Cancer Prevention and Control Program. This funding will allow the DOHMH to focus on getting cancer preventive screenings to those who need them.

## **Reducing the Toll of Tobacco**

Every year in New York City more than 12,000 lives are lost to tobacco related illness. The number one cancer killer in New York City is lung cancer. Cigarette smoking is the number one risk factor for lung cancer and in the United States, cigarette smoking is linked to about 80% to 90% of lung cancer deaths.<sup>2</sup>

While New York City experienced a historic decline in smoking rates between 2003 and 2017, that decline has leveled off

These trends are especially troubling given the fact that according to the CDC, being a current or former smoker increases the risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Smoking impairs the immune system and lung function, making it harder for the body to fight off coronaviruses and other respiratory diseases.

It is critical that New York City step up its efforts to curb tobacco use.

### **Budget recommendation #2:**

- **New York City should maintain its current \$7.2 Million in funding to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Tobacco Control Program.** A well-funded tobacco control program will not only produce long-term savings but can have an immediate benefit.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/health-inequity-persists-unheard-third>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic\\_info/risk\\_factors.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic_info/risk_factors.htm)

ACS CAN's mission is to support evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. With that objective in mind, we appreciate your commitment to the fight against cancer. With your support of the above-mentioned budget priorities in 2021-2022 you can reduce New York City's cancer rate; help identify cancers at their earliest- and often most treatable- stage and ensure that cancer patients are adequately supported from the public policy standpoint as they battle this devastating disease.

While COVID-19 may have stopped many things in our lives, cancer hasn't stopped. So, neither have we. I thank you for considering these requests.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Davoli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Davoli  
New York City & New Jersey Government Relations Director  
ACS CAN

CC: Corey Johnson, Speaker, New York City Council

Mark Levine, Chairperson, Health Committee, New York City Council