

January 23, 2024

Senate Finance Committee Chair Liz Krueger
Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chair Helene E. Weinstein
Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chair Senate Standing Committee on Health
Assemblyperson Amy Paulin, Chair Assembly Standing Committee on Health

(Sent via email to financechair@nysenate.gov and wamchair@nyassembly.gov)

On behalf of the American Heart Association, the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, we are committed encouraging healthier lifestyles and reducing the risks associated with chronic disease. We believe all New Yorker's deserve to live longer and healthier lives and ask you to join us in this fight by supporting these critical appropriations and policy efforts.

Now more than ever it is critical for New York State to invest in the health of its residents. **As you craft your budget for the coming year, we urge you to not subject public health programs to cuts. We support level funding for the following programs:**

- \$5.9 million to the Obesity and Diabetes Prevention Program
- \$692,000 to the Hypertension/Healthy Heart Program, and
- \$46 million to the Tobacco Control Program
- \$2 million to for SNAP Healthy Incentive Programs (i.e. Double Up Food Bucks; Fresh to You)

We know that prevention is key when it comes to dealing with chronic diseases. If these programs do not have the funds they need to operate effectively in our communities, schools, and workplaces then we are putting New Yorkers at grave health risk when many of these chronic illnesses are preventable. **We are working to ensure that all our residents, especially our children and families are being able to have access to vital services:**

- **Healthy School Meals for All** – Support establishing universal breakfast and lunch programs in all New York schools.
- **Family Paid Medical and Family Leave**- Adequate and accessible paid leave is vital to ensuring workers can manage a serious personal health condition, care for a family member with a serious health condition, or bond with a new child without worrying about losing their income or employment. The American Heart Association has long fought to ensure that people have access to care to support their health and wellbeing, and being able to take time off work is fundamentally an access to care issue. New York's current patchwork system of inadequate paid and unpaid leave forces some patients and caregivers to choose between taking care of themselves and their families or keeping their income and job. We feel strongly that all New York workers have access to comprehensive paid family and medical leave.
- **Please support \$1 million for CPR in school education graduation requirement** – All New York State high school senior seniors are required to learn hands-only CPR before they graduate. Funding is needed for schools to obtain the resources to meet this education requirement.
- **Please support implementing Telecommunicator CPR (T-CPR)** - which would require all 911 telecommunicators that provide dispatch for emergency medical conditions be trained in the delivery of high-quality telecommunicator CPR (T-CPR). Having access to quality systems of care is the best way to ensure that New Yorkers are receiving the care they need.
- **Please consider increasing the vapor products in the NYS tax law and increasing the e-cigarette tax to 75% the wholesale rate**- This measure is vital to reduce youth use and further work toward health equity.

- **Addressing the E-Cigarette Loopholes**-When New York State included language in the final 2020-21 budget to address the epidemic of e-cigarette use among youth, it created enforcement loopholes in the law that have caused challenges to effective enforcement of the law. The exemption for products and loopholes that allow distributors to continue to carry and sell prohibited products to merchants as well as vagueness that allows retailers to claim they are selling products remotely undercut the effectiveness of the law. These policies have already been delayed far too long, costing the health and lives of thousands of New Yorkers and resulting in continued youth initiation of highly addictive tobacco products. We have a critical opportunity to do the right thing to protect public health for generations to come. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Senate Majority support the inclusion of these critical tobacco control policies in the State Budget this year.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these important issues. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

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American Heart Association

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