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STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

THE OFFICE OF
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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

I began drafting this document before the COVID-19 pandemic hit New York City with one thought in mind: Our health care system is not sustainable. The onset and subsequent second wave of the pandemic have not changed my mind. In fact, it has made an even stronger case that we need a citywide focus on health in New York City. This pandemic has only exacerbated the health challenges and disparities that exist in this city while creating new ones. My office has spent countless hours handing out personal protective equipment (PPE), not simply because we wanted to, but because our health system did not provide them to the people who needed it. That is the very definition of a failing system. This pandemic has shown us that our health system is vulnerable and that we cannot always rely on assistance from other levels of government. We have to act if we want better outcomes. Our health care system is not going to change itself.

More than 26 percent of Brooklyn adults are obese, and more than 10 percent have diabetes¹. Chronic disease is taking a toll on the health and well-being of Brooklyn residents from Brownsville to Brooklyn Heights. Whether constituents are struggling with heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, or weight management, nutrition plays a critical role in their health. Further, poor nutrition contributes to preventable, diet-related chronic disease, with low-income communities and communities of color being disproportionately affected. The current urban environment often contributes to poor dietary intake with little space to grow fruits and vegetables, limited access to fresh and high-quality ingredients, few opportunities for citizens to connect with the process of food production, and an abundance of convenient but poor-quality food. I strive to create a healthier Brooklyn and work to implement both educational opportunities and policy changes to support lasting change.

For me, healthy eating is personal. After being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in 2016, I made significant changes in my diet, embracing a whole food, plant-based lifestyle, which reversed my diabetes. Since making the transition and recognizing the significant impact proper nutrition can have on health and well-being, I have made it a top priority to use my leadership position to educate others on the critical link between diet and health.

The goal of many of our initiatives is to prevent the onset of chronic diet-related disease, empower those with chronic disease to effectively manage and treat their conditions, as well as encourage and support individuals to make high-quality lifestyle changes that will improve their overall health and well-being. While progress has already been made to support healthy eating and prevention of chronic disease in the borough, efforts will continue to develop and expand sustainable programming to service the needs of Brooklyn's dynamic and growing population.

The Strategic Policy Statement is issued by borough presidents throughout New York City and its purpose is to highlight challenges in the borough and the actions this office will take to address them. It is a New York City Charter-mandated document that is intended to provide a summary of the most significant long-term issues facing the borough, outline the policy goals related to those issues, and the borough president's proposed strategies for achieving those goals. This Strategic Policy Statement, simply put, is a blueprint for what my office will work to advance over the course of my time in office.

With all that said, I crafted this Strategic Policy Statement with a singular lens — public health. I have set forth the role that nutrition plays in our overall health; however, it also plays a role in the health of our planet. Furthermore, this document will detail the ways in which the public's health is impacted or influenced across every policy area. The singular lens of public health through which everything will be viewed enables a review of the literature, an assessment of the challenges facing the borough, and policy recommendations that are interconnected and bolstered across the entirety of the policy portfolio.


Eric Adams

YOUTH

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

With more than one million school-aged children across New York City and more than half-a-million people aged 18 years or younger in Brooklyn, youth issues pervade policy in the city and the borough.² Young people encounter health-related issues differently and, oftentimes, in more formidable ways than do older populations; their habits, tastes, and broader developmental pathways are influenced during their childhood, adolescence, and young adult years.

BACKGROUND:

Health conditions such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, early signs of heart disease, asthma, and other chronic and non-chronic diseases impact young people in significant ways. Young people from families with a lower socioeconomic status than their more well-off peers appear to suffer from greater rates of asthma, weight management issues, and other health conditions.³ Furthermore, vulnerable populations among youth, particularly those from the LGBTQ+ community, experience even greater rates of physical and mental health distress.⁴ Therefore, programs and advocacy efforts have centered on a “person-in-environment,” in which each aspect of a young person’s daily life is considered in order to support and nourish the whole person.

For example, my office has worked across issue areas to see that healthier food is more available and affordable to children in schools. The Meatless Monday initiative started in 15 Brooklyn schools and expanded to every New York City public school beginning in the fall of 2019.⁵ Additionally, my office has put financial and programmatic support behind an initiative to train school teachers how to administer meditation sessions with students.⁶ The larger goal of these efforts is to nourish children and young people through nutritious meals and activities designed to prepare a child for their school day with a calm mindset. Research on mindfulness-based meditation demonstrates that regular sessions of meditation can assist in generalized stress reduction and enhanced lucidity.⁷

Moving ahead, programming must continue to reflect the fact that children, adolescents, and young adults are present in home environments that may or may not contain certain risk factors (such as household economic stratifications, interpersonal or intimate partner violence, abuse of other forms, food insecurity, housing instability, or other health conditions) or protective factors (such as higher levels of household income, parental educational attainment, greater access to healthier foods, or additional opportunities for edifying extracurricular activities).

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Bolster and expand initiative to train teachers how to administer meditation sessions in school by expanding the Yoga and Mindfulness Teacher Preparation Program
- Engage in cross-programming that integrates supportive elements for vulnerable youth such as LGBTQ+ social support outlets within general youth programming and peer-identified risk factors and opportunities for support

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Runaway and homeless youth are defined as homeless and unaccompanied young people up to the age of 24. They represent a growing and unique problem in the City and throughout the country. Because New York City remains an attractive place for young people to pursue their dreams, our City bears a disproportionate and ever-growing number of this displaced and largely unsupported population. As each is at increased peril, it is imperative that we provide a nurturing environment that will enable each of them to reach their potential as a human being.

² See United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts, Kings County (Brooklyn Borough) New York, available at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/kingscountybrooklynboroughnewyork>.

³ See Schreier, H.M. and Chen, E., Socioeconomic status and the health of youth: a multilevel, multidomain approach to conceptualizing pathways, *Psychological Bulletin* (May 2013), available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22845752>.

⁴ See <https://www.brooklyn-usa.org/bp-adams-and-chancellor-carranza-announce-first-of-its-kind-grant-to-help-establish-yoga-and-mindfulness-in-classrooms-across-brooklyn/>.

⁷ Suzanne Kane, 10 Surprising Health Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation, *Psych Central*, available at: <https://psychcentral.com/blog/10-surprising-health-benefits-of-mindfulness-meditation/>.

BACKGROUND:

Homeless youth are known to have multiple challenges. Significant numbers are depressed, show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, and alcohol or drug dependency.⁸ As many of these young people either ran away from an intolerable home condition, were kicked out of their home by intolerant parents, or “aged out” of the foster care system with no place to go, it is not surprising that this population would be subject to the kinds of problems and issues described above.

Most of these young people are left to sleep on subways and other unsuitable for habitation locations, “couch surf,” or are forced to deal with the sex trade to survive. Ninety percent of these young people are minorities, and roughly 40 percent are LGBTQ+.⁹ Each unaccompanied young person left homeless in this fashion is more likely to become drug or alcohol dependent, HIV positive, or a burden to the criminal justice system than are their counterparts who find shelter with their family or in a safe and nurturing environment.

Studies have shown that brain development continues to the age of 24 years.¹⁰ Until 2018, New York State and City, defined this population by limiting access to youth shelters to those under the age of 21. Last year, both the State and City redefined the age as going to the age of 24, a definition in accordance with the Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.¹¹

Notwithstanding, capacity at New York City youth shelters remains limited. Shelter agencies report that they have wait lists for beds, especially during colder months.¹² Capacity for 21-24 year olds, who must be housed separately from younger youth, is virtually non-existent. Thus far, the City has funded only 60 beds for this large population.¹³ This is due to the recent change in the law and the difficult process of certifying new beds for use. Most significantly, funding is limited and has not yet been expanded in a meaningful way to cover the broader population that needs to be served.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Use the Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP) to advocate for additional shelter beds
- Work with advocacy groups, providers, and City and State agencies to create shelter bed capacity at the 21-24 year old level
- Work to encourage all unaccompanied youth to finish high school and post-secondary education or training
- Ensure that unaccompanied youth have access to mental and physical health programs within the entire continuum of shelter services (from drop in shelter to emergency shelter to transitional living)
- Work with stakeholders to find innovative approaches to preventing youth homelessness
- Continue to expand the mobile shower initiative throughout the city

EDUCATION

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Our schools are a natural place to focus our efforts around improving the long-term health of the borough. Not only do students adopt life-improving skills while in school, they take them home to their families, spreading the value of public education beyond the walls of the school building. Healthy students perform better academically and are happier. Healthy school food should be an absolute minimum for our communities.

⁸ All Our Children: Strategies to Prevent Homelessness, Strengthen Services and Build Support for LGBTQ Youth, NYC Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Runaway and Homeless Youth (2010) at page 14.

⁹ Id at 13; see also Report of the New York City Homelessness Taskforce (2019), at page 5.

¹⁰ Arain, M. et al, Maturation of the Adolescent Brain, Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment, Vol. 9, 449–461 (2013).

¹¹ 34 USC Subtitle I Chapter 111 Subchapter III, available at: <http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?jsessionid=A484907F2810FBFECEAB8A3B665E3764?req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title34-chapter111-subchapter3&saved=%7CMTAgVVND%7CdHJIZXNvcnQ%3D%7CdHJ1ZQ%3D%3D%7C14395%7Ctrue%7Cprelim&edition=prelim>.

¹² See <https://citylimits.org/2020/02/06/amid-youth-homeless-crisis-nyc-has-ramped-up-shelter-capacity/>.

¹³ Report of the New York City Youth Homelessness Taskforce. (2019, January) at page 5. Retrieved from http://youthtoday.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/09/Report-of-NYC-Youth-Homelessness-Taskforce_January-20191.pdf.

BACKGROUND:

There are several initiatives my office has undertaken to improve the health of Brooklyn students, ranging from the provision of healthier school food and mindfulness training to greenhouses and hydroponic classrooms. All of these programs have a role to play in making Brooklyn a healthier borough.

Last year we launched a pilot “Meatless Monday” initiative in several Brooklyn schools.¹⁴ The goal was to introduce students to meatless options, prepared tastefully, that would help them to eat healthier, but also to recognize the importance of their food choices. The overwhelming success of this pilot led to the expansion on “Meatless Monday” to every school in New York City, exposing every New York City Department of Education (DOE) student to food options they may have never considered before. While we are in the early stages of this program, the enthusiasm of Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza have convinced me that this is an initiative that will have impact for decades to come for countless New York City families. As this initiative moves forward, we will continue our effort to remove processed meats from the school lunch menu. The World Health Organization (WHO) has labelled them a Group I carcinogen (along with cigarettes and plutonium).¹⁵ Group I carcinogens have a direct link to cancer in humans. Given this fact, it is unconscionable that we continue to serve them as acceptable food in New York City schools.

This year, we also funded and launched our Mindfulness initiative. The initial phase will have DOE administrators trained in meditation and yoga, so that they can then bring those practices back to their respective schools and districts. I am excited about this launch and am proud to partner with Chancellor Carranza and his team to bring this program to more and more schools in the coming months and years. Every student deserves to develop skills that will allow them to deal with stress and the rigors of life in the city. By giving them this power to focus their thoughts, we are truly addressing the needs of the whole child. The benefits will be equally shared with the teachers and administrators across the DOE and will have a broad impact on students’ academic performance and social-emotional intelligence. That is the true test of school success.

To help students continue to use what they are learning about healthy eating in the classroom, I also have dedicated more than \$7 million in capital funding to my Growing Brooklyn’s Future initiative to give students a space to grow their own food. Greenhouses and hydroponic classrooms give students the knowledge and skills that they will carry with them forever. Combined with cooking programs, these skills will dramatically change the lives of countless students. I have seen students who would not normally touch a tomato or a zucchini change their tune when those tomatoes and zucchinis was grown with their own hands and by their own labor. It is even more pronounced when they also learn how to cook the food they grow.

The other piece that must be incorporated into all New York City schools is physical fitness. To do this properly, we need the following two things: proper space in which to do physical activities, aka gym space, and someone who can ensure fairness in access to sports teams and facilities.

My office did a survey of Brooklyn schools with regard to their gym space. The results were alarming. More than 16 percent of Brooklyn schools do not have a dedicated gym space.¹⁷ Of those schools that do have gym space, more than half must share that space with another school.¹⁸ But even schools with dedicated space have major safety concerns. Dangerous support beams, buckling floors, exposed metal surfaces, and more. Too many schools have gym spaces that are converted from classrooms or cafeterias.¹⁹ These are not proper physical education spaces.

While we are encouraged by the Mayor’s dedicating \$385 million to gym space in the highest need schools,²⁰ we need to ensure every school has access. We must dedicate the capital now. To ensure this happens, we need someone whose sole job is to address these issues. It cannot be, like it has been, one of several major issue areas for a single deputy chancellor. We need a sports czar who can coordinate all of these needs and not be distracted by other issues in order to make a truly equitable physical education system for all New York City students.

¹⁴ See <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/675-17/mayor-de-blasio-chancellor-fari-a-borough-president-adams-15-brooklyn-schools-to>.

¹⁵ World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer, Press Release No. 240 (October 2015), available at: https://www.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/pr240_E.pdf.

¹⁶ Physical Education Access and Infrastructure: Building the Full Personhood of New York City’s Student Population, available at: https://www.brooklyn-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/PhysEd18_Report.pdf.

¹⁷ *Ibid* at 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁰ Katie Honan, Dozens of Schools to Get New Gyms Under \$385M Initiative, Mayor Says, DNAInfo.com, available at: <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170605/ridgewood/department-of-education-mayor-de-blasio-new-gyms-physical-education/>.

Finally, we are working on healthy social-emotional programs with schools. We encouraged campuses to bring all schools located there together to face challenges. In our participatory budget (PB) initiative, we dedicated \$500,000 each to two Brooklyn high school campuses that contained multiple schools. The schools created a ballot initiative in which students from every school had to run and vote for the changes they wanted to see on campus.

We also used our expense funding to create a peer-to-peer counseling program for students to learn how to better react to police interactions. By giving students the skills to conduct themselves in a safe but empowering way, they will have a better chance to live fulfilling lives in our borough.

Beyond actual school sites, we are initiating our Brooklyn Begins Early Childhood Development Initiative. The goal is to bring information and resources to parents and families to help their 0-3 year old's brain development. We have created kits that will include tactile and educational materials that will be distributed in local shops. Our goal is to surround children and their parents with the tools they need to develop properly and close the learning gap that already affects many children before they even reach the public education system. Eighty percent of a child's brain develops by the time they are three years old. That time is critical for them and our education system must reflect the importance of that stage in their development. It is much harder and more expensive to try and catch those children up later on down the line. We must engage them sooner.

Relatedly, we have advocated for lactation rooms in all public buildings, including the one we installed at Brooklyn Borough Hall. Breastfeeding is an important way to help children develop their full potential. Mothers should be able to feed and bond with their child in a safe, clean, supportive environment. The City has taken great strides, but there is still work to be done. There needs to be oversight as to the cleanliness and use of lactation rooms.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Develop a comprehensive curriculum that teaches students the dietary dangers of processed foods and the benefits of fresh, local produce on their health.
- Ensure that every school has adequate gym space
- Create a sports czar who can coordinate fitness in schools
- Expand Participatory Budget Restorative Justice Program so that other campuses and other elected officials can take part in helping students determine their own futures
- Distribute Brooklyn Begins kits throughout the borough
- Create a method of oversight for lactation rooms

AGING

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Brooklyn is home to more than 325,000 adults over the age of 65.²¹ That number represents more than 12 percent of the population. As Brooklynites continue to live longer, we must ensure that they do so in good health.

BACKGROUND:

The first step toward ensuring healthy aging is to provide access to the means of better health. Access to government and health-related facilities is a must for all Brooklynites, but we must specifically address the challenges of access that our seniors face. Four years ago, my office undertook an accessibility audit of Brooklyn Borough Hall in an effort to improve access to the People's House. We made improvements and have encouraged others to do the same.

With approximately half of the senior population living alone, they are at risk of social isolation, but also of not having adequate means to get to critical appointments. Access-a-Ride has made some strides forward, but continues to be a stressful occasion for many users. Allowing Access-a-Ride vehicles to use bus lanes is a major improvement that will reduce travel time for those using the service. We pushed legislation for this change and were glad to see the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) take this necessary step.

²¹ New York City Comptroller's Office, Aging with Dignity: A Blueprint for Serving NYC's Growing Senior Population, (March 2017) available at: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/aging-with-dignity-a-blueprint-for-serving-nycs-growing-senior-population/>.

Another area of progress is Fair Fares, enabling lower-income New Yorkers to have affordable access to public transportation. Fair fares must be expanded to also include Access-a-Ride users.

Housing insecurity is another major threat to senior health. The stress and uncertainty created by rising rents and fewer affordable options has a profoundly negative effect on seniors. The recent E-hail pilot was popular among users.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Fully implement the recommendations in our Age-Friendly Brooklyn report, including:
 - Provide more senior affordable housing throughout the City
 - Expand grandparent housing
 - Expand supportive housing for individuals aged 55 and over
 - Expand the E-hail pilot and bring greater, more efficient access to seniors
 - Improve infrastructure such as sidewalks so as to reduce the risk of falling
 - Expand the number of City Benches, prioritizing neighborhoods with large concentrations of older people reporting ambulatory difficulty
 - Expand Fair Fares (half-price discount to MetroCards for New Yorkers who are at or below 100 percent of the Federal poverty level) to Access-A-Ride
 - Expand the number of Citi Bikes with pedal assist
 - Develop a ride-hailing app for Access-A-Ride expansion
 - Use FASTRACK (temporary suspension of train service to more quickly perform subway repairs and upgrades) to more quickly improve subway accessibility and comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Expand dedicated bus lanes
 - Encourage arts and cultural institutions to prioritize older people as consumers and producers of arts and culture
 - Increase funding to expand computer and tech classes administered by the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA), Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), New York City Parks Department (NYC Parks), and Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)

HOUSING

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

With an ever expanding population in New York City, housing insecurity challenges an increasing number of households. The results of this challenge can be seen in mental health issues that result of the stress of housing insecurity, as well as unhealthy apartments. Consequently, it is imperative that our housing preservation and development initiatives promote better public health through achievement of housing that is free from lead, mold, excessive noise, and has healthy air quality.

BACKGROUND:

Maintaining and securing healthy housing, free from environmental hazards, nurtures the physical and mental health of the occupants. In New York City, 59 percent of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents are living with mold and/or lead paint.²² For the rest of the city, 44 percent of residents are rent-burdened,²³ including 49 percent who are extremely rent-burdened.²⁴ Enhancing initiatives that allow residents to remain housed, without exposing households to rent-burdened status or aggravating such status, and increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing, would reduce or minimize mental health compromises. Removing and remediating lead and mold would improve the health of apartment dwellers.

²² Benfer, A. Emily, "New York's public housing system is the size of a city. It's failing children", February 11, 2018 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/new-yorks-public-housing-system-is-the-size-of-a-city-its-failing-children/2019/02/11/458f63c2-2bb7-11e9-984d-9b8fba003e81_story.html?utm_term=.f99c7c89f549.

²³ Warerkar, Tanay, "Nearly half of NYC households are rent burdened, A huge portion of very low income New Yorker pay more than half their income in rent", October 12, 2018 <https://ny.curbed.com/2018/10/12/17965416/nyc-rent-burden-households-affordable-housing>.

²⁴ "Think Your Rent is High? Documenting New York City's Severest Rent Burdens", Citizen Budget Commission, October 11, 2018 <https://cbcny.org/research/think-your-rent-high>.

Mental illness and substance abuse are two leading factors of homelessness in New York City. Far too many people are ending up in shelters or living on the street for lack of a diagnosis or access to treatment facilities.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

New York State should:

- Reign in prevailing rent lease increases
 - Address demolition vacancy loophole
 - Designate developers for its Vital Brooklyn Round II Request For Proposal (RFP) and issue remaining RFPs for its Vital Brooklyn properties
 - Call on the MTA to advance development RFPs for its rail right-of-ways as rail yards

New York City should:

- Adequately fund financing options towards compelling owners with expiring affordability regulatory agreements to refinance subject to long-term affordability commitments
 - Enhance funding for housing court representation
 - Enhance funding for rent supplements
 - Adequately fund the development of the City's remaining vacant land and underdevelopment (municipal parking lots, Next Gen, etc.), inclusive of an enhanced rate of supportive housing
 - Adequately fund faith-based developments resulting in affordable housing
 - Call on the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) to advance rezoning along the Broadway and 98th Street/Livonia Avenue transit corridors and to advance rezonings for Bushwick, East Flatbush, Gowanus, M-Crown, and Nostrand Avenue/Flatbush Junction
 - Call on DCP to establish a special permit for discretionary density tied to enhanced provision of affordable housing
 - Call on DCP to qualify rent-burdened households that would reduce the degree of rent burden to become housing lottery eligible
- Improve access to mental health treatment for all New Yorkers, with a focus on outreach to homeless communities
- Improve access to substance abuse treatment for all New Yorkers, with a focus on outreach to homeless communities
- Urge New York Congressional Delegation to address impacts the legislation pertaining to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit to households who are rent-burdened
- Continue to advocate for passive house construction, and the incorporation of wind turbines, solar panels, blue/green and/or white roofs, enlarged tree pits, and rain gardens

TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Our transportation system serves as the lifeblood of our city. From traveling to work, school, or recreational activities, our transportation infrastructure must be improved to provide movement for people, goods, and services. It is imperative that as we start to evaluate our transportation methods, we consider the health implications of our modes of travel.

BACKGROUND:

Quality transportation services are vital to the economic growth of Brooklyn and New York City. Residents rely on this infrastructure to provide access to jobs, schools, shops, entertainment, and medical care. Transportation must be

accessible, provided at a reasonable cost, and safe for all users, particularly those who are most vulnerable such as our seniors and children.

Brooklyn needs a transportation infrastructure that will help ensure that our quality-of-life and overall economic health are supported with enhanced transportation measures that include walking, biking, and mass transit as a central part of future transportation policy decisions. From electric buses to shared-use mobility, our transportation infrastructure must be adaptable to the new modes of transportation.

The City must move toward an all-electric fleet of vehicles, from buses to agency fleets. A major investment by the City will help to develop infrastructure and momentum for electric vehicles while simultaneously reducing our carbon footprint and making New York City a healthier place to live.

Ongoing work with the DOT has looked at the expanded use of mobility travel in our city. For DOT, that means allocating more street space to the most efficient modes of travel on our streets: walking, biking, and buses.²⁵ These types of efforts will help to continue to make our city greener and more sustainable for years to come.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Investigate ways that public transportation affects human health
 - Incorporate a human health element into our transportation planning decisions
- Explore how transportation and land use decisions affect health risks
 - Call for new developments to meet transportation proximity guidelines (e.g. bus route corridor, bike access, transit)
- Call on the Mayor and City Council to dedicate funding for transportation safety improvement
- Address missed connections in cycling network and free transfers at stations in close proximity
- Expand citywide and make permanent the Atlantic ticket program
- Fast track making stations ADA accessible

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

As the borough continues to grow in both population and commerce, it is critical that policies reflect the person-productivity connection and the overarching economic implications. Economic growth should never be an excuse for endangering public wellness.

BACKGROUND:

Brooklyn's large population, diverse communities, and varied landscape show through in the borough's economic development. From 2009-2017, Brooklyn contributed 24 percent of all job growth across New York City; this rate outpaced the state and the nation.²⁶ Brooklyn's Tech Triangle, which includes DUMBO, Downtown Brooklyn, and the Brooklyn Navy Yard, is home to some 1,350 innovation companies, the highest concentration of technology-related companies outside of Manhattan.²⁷ By sector, health care is the largest employer, with significant growth in the last decade.²⁸

Public health is a looming presence in the economic growth and development of the country, of the State, of the City, and of the borough. Lost wages, productivity, and employer expenditures on health-related matters from employees dealing with chronic disease to rising premiums for employees, health casts a long shadow.²⁹ Thus, health issues must be a component of economic growth, whether from the employer or the employee side of the equation; for, the health of workers matter to employers and the health of the larger community matters to city-dwellers and stakeholders alike.

²⁵ New York City Department of Transportation, Strategic Plan: Chapter 3: Mobility (September 2016, pp.27) www.nycdotplan.nyc.

²⁶ "New York City Employment Trends," Office of the New York State Comptroller, February 2018, <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt10-2018.pdf>.

²⁷ "An Economic Snapshot of Brooklyn," Office of the New York State Comptroller, June 2018, <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt3-2019.pdf>.

²⁸ "An Economic Snapshot of Brooklyn," Office of the New York State Comptroller, June 2018, <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt3-2019.pdf>.

²⁹ "Poor Worker Health Costs U.S. Employers Half Trillion Dollars A Year," Bruce Japsen, Forbes, November 15, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucejapsen/2018/11/15/poor-worker-health-costs-u-s-employers-half-trillion-dollars-a-year/#7572b66b6d3b>.

Nationally, the economy loses approximately half a trillion dollars in unrealized gains due to health-related issues including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, depression, dental issues, and other chronic conditions.³⁰ Revealing an important economic-health link, New York City health statistics show that individuals with lower socioeconomic statuses and those diagnosed with a chronic disease like hypertension or diabetes are more likely to experience depression than their more well-off and healthier counterparts.³¹ Moreover, there is an inextricable bond between the health of workers and the health of the economy. Moving ahead, policies must creatively address this linkage, whether through wellness programs or built environment alterations that more effectively utilize workspaces and contribute to the health of employees.

Thus, the issue of urban agriculture has been a priority area for growth, development, and education and looks to be just as critical in the coming years. My office has put \$10 million in capital funding into urban agriculture projects across the borough, put weight behind measures in the City Council to level the playing field for, and increase the availability of, urban farming across the whole of New York City, and supported the issue through education and coalition building.

First introduced in July 2017 and reintroduced in 2018, Council Member Rafael L. Espinal, Jr. and a number of other council members (at the behest of my office) put forth a measure, Intro 1058, to call upon DCP to prepare and present a comprehensive urban agriculture plan to the Mayor and the City Council speaker by July 2019.³²

Urban agriculture offers opportunities for local growing, increased curriculum around healthy eating and how it is linked to both human and planetary health, and increases the availability of fresh produce to communities that oftentimes lack such products. Furthermore, the development of urban agriculture offers a chance for constituents to connect to the larger food system, understand how it can both impact and brighten the environment around them, and displays that, even in a densely populated city, chances exist to connect everyday life to the food on their plate.

A study from Brooklyn Law School's Center for Urban Business Entrepreneurship found that there are some 14,000 acres of rooftop space and, if utilized for urban agriculture purposes, could yield enough food for approximately 20 million people in the New York City metropolitan area.³³ However, zoning issues persist and remain unclear, with urban agriculture only allowable atop industrial, commercial, and school buildings. Further, the growing and selling of produce are not allowable in the same space, which poses an additional challenge in bringing fresh produce to communities across Brooklyn that need it most. The passage of the aforementioned resolution calling upon DCP to provide a comprehensive plan would organize, advance, and create clarity on this issue.

In addition to connecting people to plants and the food they eat, the office has designed programming to inform, engage, and assist constituents in deciphering the complex financial world in which they live, whether it is learning about credit scores, home mortgages, retirement plans, or tax matters, the office has worked to connect individual economic health to the greater health of the borough's economic wellbeing. We have held regular events on financial literacy, mortgage assistance, and tax preparation. We also published a Financial Resource Guide for Brooklynites.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Convene business leaders and health professionals to engage in dialogue about how nutrition, movement, and overall wellness plays into a firm's bottom-line and how financial struggles affect overall health
- Continue emphasis on utilizing space for urban agriculture
 - Allocate capital funding to schools to develop, bolster, and maintain gardens, whether hydroponic, schoolyard, or rooftop-based
 - Pass legislation requiring a comprehensive urban agriculture plan for the City
- Continue and enhance programming centered on financial literacy and financial health

³⁰ "Poor Worker Health Costs U.S. Employers Half Trillion Dollars A Year," Bruce Japsen, Forbes, November 15, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucejapsen/2018/11/15/poor-worker-health-costs-u-s-employers-half-trillion-dollars-a-year/#7572b66b6d3b>.

³¹ "Depression among New York City Adults," NYC Vital Signs, April 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/survey/depression.pdf>.

³² "A Local Law in relation to developing a comprehensive urban agriculture plan," New York City Council, August 2018, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3597652&GUID=8C4E5F5E-90C7-45F2-80E0-6BDA38D16DF2&Options=&Search=>.

³³ "Urban Agriculture," Office of the Brooklyn Borough President, 2017, <https://www.brooklyn-usa.org/urban-agriculture/>.

PARKS/ENVIRONMENT/ENERGY

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

With an ever interconnected world, global environmental challenges loom large in local communities. Consequently, it is imperative that our parks, energy, and environment initiatives promote better public health through cleaner air and water, greener and rejuvenated outdoor spaces, and healthier foods that reduce chronic disease risk and act simultaneously to counteract the effects of climate change.

BACKGROUND:

Increasing healthier food options and plant-based alternatives in schools, hospitals, and other settings nurture the physical and mental health of the person consuming these foods, but also serve to make the planet healthier and more sustainable.³⁴ In New York City, 43 percent of elementary school children are at an unhealthy weight.³⁵ Consuming more plant-based foods may be one of the single biggest ways to prevent, reduce, or even reverse chronic disease in people and one of the most powerful ways to slow and ultimately reverse the effects of climate change.³⁶ A recent study in *Science*, shows that meat and dairy production causes approximately 60 percent of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.³⁷ Reducing the consumption of animal products helps reduce the land degradation and carbon footprint caused by animal agriculture. Clearly, a focus on our health will help us improve the health of our environment as well.

Brooklyn is proud to be the home of Shirley Chisholm State Park slated to be completed by 2021.³⁹ The sprawling 407-acre space will serve Brooklynites and New Yorkers in important ways from active to passive recreational activities that aid physical and mental health. Additionally, simply improving outdoor community spaces through greening and revitalization projects has shown to improve the mental health of local residents.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the development of urban parks and the greening of community spaces more broadly albeit slowly improves air quality and slightly counteracts carbon emissions, as new trees, plants, and other vegetation inhabit spaces previously devoid of many, if any foliage.⁴¹

Ongoing citywide efforts to paint rooftops white to reduce the “urban heat island effect” serve to help residents manage high temperatures, reduce air-conditioning costs, and utilize less energy as a result. The impact does not end with the environmental consideration though, as “energy insecurity” and the stress from managing high utility costs negatively impact not only the mental health of residents but their physical health as well, with children, seniors, and other vulnerable populations suffering negative physical health consequences.⁴²

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Reduce meat consumption through food contracts reform and procurement
 - Call for the convening of the City Council to review contracting and procurement processes
 - Educate elected officials and agency staff around the dangers of processed meat consumption
- Improve open space for recreational and passive activities
 - Continue to use capital investment to improve community access to spaces
 - Expand and protect of open spaces

³⁴ Michael Greger with Gene Stone, *How Not to Die*, Flatiron Books (2015); and see “Eating Less Meat Essential to Curb Climate Change, Says Report,” United Nations University via The Guardian, December 5, 2014, <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/eating-less-meat-essential-to-curb-climate-change-says-report>.

³⁵ Obesity in Children – <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/resources/public-health-action-kits-obesity-in-children.page>. Depression among New York City Adults,” NYC Vital Signs, April 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/survey/depression.pdf>.

³⁶ “Huge Reduction in Meat-eating ‘Essential’ to Avoid Climate Breakdown,” The Guardian, October 10, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/10/huge-reduction-in-meat-eating-essential-to-avoid-climate-breakdown>.

³⁷ “Avoiding Meat and Dairy is ‘Single Biggest Way’ to Reduce Your Impact on Earth,” The Guardian, May 31, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-earth>.

³⁸ “Tackling the World’s Biggest Problem: Meat,” UN Environment, September 26, 2018, <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/tackling-worlds-most-urgent-problem-meat>. And see “Livestock’s Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2006, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e.pdf>.

³⁹ “Governor Cuomo Announces New 407-Acre State Park Along Jamaica Bay to be Named Shirley Chisholm State Park,” State of New York, September 5, 2018, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-nycs-largest-state-park-open-brooklyn-2019>.

⁴⁰ “Greening Vacant Lots Reduces Feelings of Depression in City Dwellers,” Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, July 23, 2018, <https://www.mailman.columbia.edu/public-health-now/news/greening-vacant-lots-reduces-feelings-depression-city-dwellers>.

⁴¹ “Air Quality Effects of Urban Trees and Parks,” National Recreation and Park Association, 2010, <https://www.nrpa.org/globalassets/research/nowak-heisler-research-paper.pdf>.

⁴² “Power Dynamic: Energy Insecurity and Health,” Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, July 23, 2018, <https://www.mailman.columbia.edu/public-health-now/news/power-dynamic-energy-insecurity-and-health>. And see “Public Health Impacts of Climate Change in NYC: The Dire Need for Aggressive Action,” Testimony before the NY City Public Advocate’s Office, November 29 2017, https://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/sites/advocate.nyc.gov/files/pa_james_climate_change_hearing_-_panel_3_testimony.pdf.

- o Implement the one percent for parks funding model, which commits one percent of the City budget to the NYC Parks totaling \$886,700,000 instead of FY19’s preliminary budget of \$501,935,000. These funds could be used to fund initiatives and projects including, but not limited to, Partnership for Parks staffing, expansion of Wi-Fi-accessible parks, repair and expand drinking fountain access, and repair and expand comfort station facilities
- Continue convening the Renewable and Sustainable Energy Taskforce (ReSET) to promote renewable energy as impactful of public health
 - o Implement the \$500,000 grant from NYSERDA to promote clean heating and cooling technology and workforce training for green jobs

PUBLIC SAFETY

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

On a yearly basis, New York City spends some \$2.4 billion incarcerating people.⁴³ Of those in custody, approximately 16 percent are considered to have some serious mental health condition⁴⁴ and a significant portion of people in City jails are minorities in a lockup facility due to a non-violent drug offense and/or a low-level parole violation, and/or pretrial detention.⁴⁵ To date, the criminal justice and corrections system has largely been dedicated to arrest and punishment rates versus de-escalation, diversion, and rehabilitation.

BACKGROUND:

Over the last decade, New York City has moved from a stop-and-frisk policy that touched some 700,000 people annually to one that is moving, however incrementally, toward policies favoring increased transparency, additional law enforcement training, and bail reforms that seek to mitigate the regressive nature of financial burden on individuals interfacing with the court system.

As with other issues discussed in this statement, public health is woven into and across public safety. For example, my office has taken steps to encourage the New York City Police Department (NYPD) to favor non-lethal tactics when responding to calls from emotionally disturbed persons (EDPs), pressed for crisis intervention training (CIT) for more officers across the police force, and advocated for measures that reduce the financial burden on accused transgressors.⁴⁶ Instead of more police presence, I am advocating for more funding for the Cure Violence initiative, where groups like Man Up! and Save Our Streets (SOS) take a public health approach to preventing gun violence.

Additionally, my office has advocated for broader prison reform issues including the food served in the City’s correctional facilities.⁴⁷ As outlined elsewhere in this document, what we eat has an impact on an individual’s mental and physical health, well-being, as well as addresses other primary issues of concern — the environment and the cost of incarceration. Chronic disease touches virtually every New Yorker in some fashion, whether personally or through familial or other interpersonal connections. Therefore, the food served in our lockup facilities ought to contribute to individual health and, by offering a more whole-food plant-based menu, the City can help people incarcerated better understand the ways they can care for their own health and, over time, contribute to lower food and health costs incurred by the New York City Department of Corrections (DOC), as it is more costly to hold and treat an individual with a chronic health condition than one who is healthier and contributing to disease reversal and prevention.

Nationally, the country has seen a number of shootings at faith-based institutions over the last number of years. From the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in South Carolina to the Tree of Life – Or L’Simcha Congregation synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, among others across the country, the nation has continued to deal with fatal tragedies at houses of worship and educational institutions in Florida and Colorado. As a former member of

⁴³ Picchi, A. (2015, May 21). How much do jails cost? More than taxpayers think. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-much-do-jails-cost-more-than-taxpayers-think/>

⁴⁴ See <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/03/nyc-seeks-to-move-mentally-ill-inmates-to-hospitals.html#:~:text=Approximately%201%2C100%20incarcerated%20people%20%E2%80%94%2016,oversees%20medical%20care%20for%20inmates.>

⁴⁵ See <https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-new-york.pdf>.

⁴⁶ John Katt via Public Advocate’s Office. Improving New York City’s Responses to Individuals in Mental Health Crisis. Available at: <https://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/reports/improving-new-york-citys-responses-to-individuals-in-mental-health-crisis/>.

⁴⁷ Rachel Holliday Smith, C. (2019, July 09). Borough Presidents Demand Do-Over on Mayor’s Planned Jails. Available at: <https://www.thecity.nyc/2019/7/9/21210953/borough-presidents-demand-do-over-on-mayor-s-planned-jails>.

law enforcement, I have taken the position that trained off duty officers should bring their firearms to their chosen house of worship in coordination with clergy security plans.⁴⁸

In June 2019, lawmakers in Albany passed legislation that stands to decriminalize marijuana and expunge the records of people convicted of low-level marijuana offenses.⁴⁹ While this does not achieve full legalization, it is a step toward greater justice and equity for communities most touched by disproportionate incarceration rates. As we move this issue forward, it is imperative to ensure that market competition exists in a legal marijuana industry, revenues from said industry are invested in communities most affected by the history of these issues, and that public health is continually monitored.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Continue advocacy of broad criminal justice reforms favoring prevention and treatment over incarceration
- Continue work to improve the quality of food served in DOC facilities across the city, with an eye toward nutritional education, cost savings, and positive implications of dietary change on mental and physical health
- Continue advocacy around marijuana legalization, with a focus on community reinvestment, public health, and market competition
- Implement mandatory learning disability screening for anyone incarcerated

IMMIGRATION

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Immigration is inherent in Brooklyn and across New York City. It provides so much texture, richness, and life to our borough, our neighborhoods, and our community at large. The challenge ahead is to combat, confront, and reform policies that are not centered on the humane treatment of, the incorporation of, and the person-first model of migrants into the city. It is a challenge that can be met while preserving and protecting safety for immigrants, non-immigrants, documented residents, and undocumented residents alike.

BACKGROUND:

New York City, and the broader country for that matter, is made up of immigrants. Whether residents are first generation, second generation, or many generations removed, they oftentimes have backgrounds that encompass different parts of the world. Today, New York City is made up of 3.1 million immigrants and more than half of residents are either immigrants or the children of immigrants. New York City is home to some 560,000 undocumented immigrants and more than one million households across the city are considered mixed status with some residents being undocumented and other residents being US citizens.⁵⁰

There are some 150 different languages spoken across the city, with Spanish, Chinese, and Russian atop the list. Immigrants come from all over the world and choose New York City to be home; top countries from which people emigrate are (1) the Dominican Republic, (2) China, and (3) Mexico.⁵¹

On a national level, rhetoric and policy emanating from the Federal government take a threatening posture toward the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants across the country. Whether through raids from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers or through treatment of detainees at the southern border, people who are undocumented are in a tenuous position.

Citywide efforts have and continue to do the work of treating undocumented immigrants with the dignity and humanity that they deserve. The NYC ID program and the provision of health care to people who are undocumented is a significant step in ensuring that, while people work through their citizenship status, they can be incorporated into our communities. The vast majority of the people who are undocumented have already been in the country for years, work hard, and contribute significantly to the city.

⁴⁸ Newman, A., Schweber, N., & Ferré-sadurní, L. (2018, October 28). Brooklyn Official Says He Will Carry a Gun Whenever He Enters a House of Worship. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/28/nyregion/eric-adams-brooklyn-guns.html>.

⁴⁹ Governor Cuomo Signs Legislation Decriminalizing Marijuana Use. (2019, July). Available at: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-signs-legislation-decriminalizing-marijuana-use>.

⁵⁰ "State of our Immigrant City Annual Report," Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, March 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/annual-report-2018.pdf>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Even with advancements on the citywide level, only approximately 42 percent of undocumented immigrants in New York City have health care coverage.⁵² Further, the reluctance by members of the immigrant community to go for treatment from medical professionals for fear that it might expose their documentation status, creates individual and exacerbates public health problems.

My office celebrates the immigrant families that have made Brooklyn great. Our Immigrant Day of Friendship brings together Brooklynites from hundreds of countries to share the best of our cultures. In addition, we have held citizenship drives to help immigrant families take steps toward citizenship in safety and with support.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Emphasize the ability to preserve and protect public safety for every person, while treating immigrants, non-immigrants, documented residents, and undocumented residents alike with dignity, humanity, and decency
- Continue to highlight the strength in our diversity
- Support Our City, Our Vote campaign to pass a municipal voting rights bill that would permit lawful residents and those with work authorizations to vote in municipal elections

ARTS/CULTURE

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The vibrancy of Brooklyn's arts and culture scene is clear. From traditional galleries to street musicians, local writing groups, and theatrical troops, Brooklyn has been and is home to creators of and appreciators of the borough's richness in artistic and cultural expressions. It is also becoming clear that the act of engaging with, whether from an amateur creator perspective or taking it in as an audience member, arts and culture prove beneficial for mental and physical health. The challenge ahead is ensuring that arts and culture are available, accessible, and affordable to everyone.

BACKGROUND:

Taking a stroll down many streets in Brooklyn, constituents will pass an occasional art gallery, a street performer playing the drums, a coffee shop with a local artist's work adorning the walls, and even an occasional bookstore. The cultural and artistic ecosystem of the borough has contributed to the lives of so many over the years. Emerging research is now showing that these engagements support the mental and physical health of people of all ages. It also appears that integration of such programming in health-proper facilities such as hospitals and senior centers aids clients as they treat, manage, and cope with their medical conditions.

A 2017 study from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice found that New York neighborhoods and their constituents benefit in far more ways from their cultural and arts experiences than they may have anticipated. The study found that in lower-income neighborhoods across New York City, the presence of artistic and cultural outlets was associated with young people experiencing better health, security, and education. Controlling for race/ethnicity and economic wellbeing, the research noted that children in rich cultural and artistic areas experienced less child abuse, slightly lower rates of obesity, and better outcomes on school exams. Additionally, their communities appeared to see fewer incidents of violent crime.⁵³

In more traditional health-related environments, the integration of and opportunities to participate in artistic and cultural avenues supports both the physical and mental health healing process. Importantly, people can find benefits from both passive and active engagement. Activities such as listening to music and expressive writing offer levels at which people can participate either as an absorber of performance or as an author of it. Clients can manage their stress better with music during their hospital stays, or recover from a traumatic experience with the use of expressive writing exercises. Clients utilizing these activities were seen to experience lower blood pressure and lower incidents of depression.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Stern, M. J., & Seifert, S. C. (2017). The social wellbeing of New York City's neighborhoods: The contribution of culture and the arts, page 2.

⁵⁴ Kimberly M. Beckwith McGuire, et al, Autonomic Effects of Expressive Writing in Individuals with Elevated Blood Pressure, *Journal of Health Psychology* (April 2005) 10(2): pp. 197-209.

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Support research opportunities to understand the quantitative impact of arts and culture engagement in medical and non-medical settings
- Include a public health component in arts and culture events in order to inform the public that a holistic model of mental and physical health does not stop when entering a museum or when listening to music
- Continue supporting both passive and active engagements with arts and culture across the borough, particularly those neighborhoods with lower concentrations of creative outlets
- Use the ULURP process to gain more affordable arts space

CIVIL RIGHTS

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The fight for civil rights in America goes hand-in-hand with the betterment of public health. Inequities in society both influence individual wellbeing through disenfranchisement and through the provision of health services in an unequal fashion. The challenge ahead and for that of Brooklyn is to see that these inequities are addressed on a systemic level and that, all the while, attention is paid to the individual as the larger struggle for civil rights continues.

BACKGROUND:

In 1966, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”⁵⁵ This statement was made on the heels of civil rights legislation becoming law under President Lyndon Johnson. While not well known, the civil rights legislation tied Federal funding to the desegregation of hospitals.⁵⁶ Up to this time, if a Black American went to the hospital, he or she was placed in a single ward, regardless of the condition that brought him or her to the hospital. Furthermore, care was administered by doctors who also happened to be Black, but there were oftentimes not enough doctors to treat their caseload. The passage of Medicare proved to be a key piece of the mosaic of civil rights legislation of the 1960s.⁵⁷

In the 1980s, with the emergence of HIV/AIDS, inequities were again persistent when contrasted with other epidemics of the time. From May 1981 through June 1982, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) spent less than \$1 million on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention despite 1,000 of the 2,000 cases at the time being fatal; whereas CDC spent some \$9 million on programming around Legionnaire’s disease that had claimed the lives of 50 people at the time. HIV/AIDS was seen as mostly affecting marginalized groups including gay men and intravenous drug users, whereas Legionnaire’s disease was seen as affecting mostly middle-aged heterosexual white men.

The examples described above demonstrate what is observed more broadly in that groups experiencing oppression are at greater risk of having worse health care access and consequently worse health outcomes. Conversely, when people from a minority community, such as those of LGBTQ+ youth, experience supportive environments from their family and from their school, they are less likely to experience depression, present lower suicide risk, and are less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol.⁶⁰

STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS:

- Continue making the public case that civil rights are connected to inequities in the public health space and the importance for advancement on these issues not only on a societal equal treatment level, but on a level that incorporates health services, health outcomes, and health disparities

⁵⁵ PNHP. Getting Martin Luther King's words right. Available at: <https://pnhp.org/news/getting-martin-luther-kings-words-right/>.

⁵⁶ Michelle Andrews, 1965: The Year that Brought Civil Rights to the Nation's Hospitals, KHN.org (August 2016). Available at: <https://khn.org/news/1965-the-year-that-brought-civil-rights-to-the-nations-hospitals/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Citation for contrasting responses to HIV/AIDS and Legionnaire's disease

⁵⁹ Foster Osei Baah, et al, Marginalization: Conceptualizing patient vulnerabilities in the framework of social determinants of health – An integrative review, Nursing Inquiry (November 2018). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6342665/>.

⁶⁰ Ybarra, M., The Power of Supportive Environments for LGBTQ+ Youth, (September 2017) Available at: www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/connected/201709/the-power-supportive-environments-lgbt-youth.

- Link calls for advances in civil rights to individual, group, and community support for those populations
- Continue to highlight inequities in the health care system and advance innovations to address these issues
- Increase funding for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PreP) and other funding that addresses historically marginalized populations.

CONCLUSION

Brooklyn continues to be the destination for the world. Whether you are looking for a fresh start or a place to launch your start-up, Brooklyn has the diversity and skilled workers to make everyone's dream a reality. But we have to remain vigilant that we don't lose the things that make Brooklyn the center of the universe. The quality-of-life for every Brooklynite is something worth fighting for. Our schools should educate all students; our streets should be safe for everyone; our infrastructure should help us reach our goals — not slow us down in the pursuit of them; our hospitals should be open to all; and everyone, regardless of their income, background, religion, or any of the myriad things that make us who we are, should be able to afford to live in the greatest city in the world.

I chose to focus on public health because our individual health and the borough's health are inextricably connected. The relationship between our policies, our borough's health, and our individual health requires us to think across policy areas and outside of our silos to create a holistic vision for our collective future. Together, we can continue to build One Brooklyn and beyond.