



Meeting of the
POLICY COMMITTEE
Matthew Lesieur and Darryl Ng, Co-Chairs

April 16, 2010
CHCANYS, 535 Eighth Avenue, 8th Floor Conference Room
10:00-12:00

Members Present: Matthew Lesieur, Lorna Littner, Esther Lok, Lucky Michaels, Darryl Ng, Jim Shields (alt. for Dorella Walters), Lyndel Urbano (alt. for Sean Cahill, PhD)

Members Absent: Susan Alston, Kareem Clemons, Gregory Cruz, Elaine Greeley, Kali Lindsey, Paul Meissner, Jan Carl Park, Andresa Person

NYC DOHMH Staff Present: Nina Rothschild, DrPH

Others Present: Kimberleigh Smith

Material Distributed:

- Agenda
- Minutes from the February 19th Meeting of the Policy Committee
- List of Open and Closed Items
- Letter to President Obama on Increasing Funding for Ryan White Programs
- Analysis of Health Care Reform from Village Care of New York
- GMHC Policy Report on Lifting the Ban on Blood Donations by MSM

Welcome/Introductions/Moment of Silence/Review of the Meeting Packet: Matt Lesieur and Darryl Ng welcomed Policy Committee members. Participants observed a moment of silence. Nina Rothschild reviewed the contents of the meeting packet.

List of Open and Closed Items: Members agreed that once the Planning Council has signed on to letters generated by other organizations on HIV/AIDS policy topics, those entries should be moved to the closed items section of the list.

Health Care Reform: Mr. Lesieur spoke about several triggers in the health care reform legislation.

- Ninety days following enactment, a high-risk insurance pool will be created. This may help some people who were previously excluded from insurance because they are HIV-infected, and the insurance companies view HIV as a pre-existing condition. We do not know yet how this high-risk pool will play out in New York.
- Tax credits will become available for small businesses to help them purchase insurance for their employees.
- Starting in 2011, insurance companies will be unable to deny coverage for children because of pre-existing conditions.
- Health insurance companies' ability to deny coverage to adults because of pre-existing conditions will not become effective until 2014. In 2014, Medicaid will expand to cover all childless single adults (including PLWHAs) up to 133% of the federal poverty level. Here in New York, Medicaid already covers individuals up to 100% of the poverty level; when the health care reform provision goes through, Medicaid (rather than ADAP) will cover the next 33%. New York and Massachusetts already have the best ADAP programs in the US. In states with far less generous coverage, seropositive individuals are not covered until they have AIDS.
- Although ETHA was not incorporated into the legislation, by 2014 it will become irrelevant because of Medicaid expansion. Until 2014, in most states, people living with HIV will have to become sick with AIDS before they can qualify for Medicaid. Community members are pushing for earlier activation of the ETHA provisions, but Mr. Lesieur is not hopeful about the success of the initiative.
- In 2014, the state health insurance exchanges will be up and running. Small business owners will be reimbursed for 50% of the cost of premiums.
- As of 2014, smoking, age, and geography will be the only factors that can affect insurance premiums.
- The definition of the minimum benefits package will be completely up to the federal government. Many opportunities will come along for input from community members regarding what should be included.
- By 2020, the donut hole in Medicare coverage will disappear.
- The legislation's provisions on abstinence-only sex education funding are not clear.
- The legislation establishes an Office of Adolescent Health but only provides for one staff person.
- The Office of Women's Health may be broken up into smaller pieces so that rather than existing as a separate entity, women's health will be incorporated into offices dealing with a variety of health issues. The

legislation generally has a philosophy of integration, rather than having different issues housed in separate silos.

The Utah State legislature is asking why Utah is funding Ryan White HIV care services if health care is covered by the federal government. The number of states voicing issues such as this will grow as the federal government takes a broader role in health care payment in 2014.

President's Proposed Budget: Mr. Lesieur agreed to send the ABAC chart with the President's proposed budget to Nina Rothschild, who will distribute it to Committee members. He also agreed to send the e-mail addresses for the Senate and House Chairs of the Committees on Appropriations so that Nina Rothschild could send them the letter asking for increased appropriations for Ryan White. Congress will probably pass a continuing resolution to keep the federal government operating through December.

New York State Budget: Esther Lok stated that another two weeks would probably elapse before the NYS budget would be released. The Assembly and the Senate haven't yet agreed on projected revenue for next year. Although the State needs to make \$9 billion in cuts, legislators have only agreed on \$6 billion. The Senate budget resolution is generally not as accurate as the Assembly's because the Senate is basically trying to win friends and influence people. The proposed increase in the cigarette tax will probably go through as a means of raising revenue, but the tax on sugared beverages will probably not go through this year because of lobbying by the industry. Esther Lok and Lyndel Urbano agreed to forward copies of letters written by their respective organizations on the budget to Nina Rothschild who would make them Planning Council-specific.

New York City Budget: Mayor Bloomberg's budget will not be released until May 6th. The City Council hearings on the budget will be pushed back. All testimony (health, education, parks, small technology, etc.) will take place on one day. The Planning Council usually testifies at the hearings and will sign up PC Community Co-Chair Charles Shorter to provide testimony. After the hearings, delegations from the boroughs will meet and will develop priorities. The budget has to be passed by June 30th, possibly followed by a mid-year adjustment. The Office of Management and Budget has asked the City to make a 7.2% cut in the budget. Mayor Bloomberg has proposed a 4% cut to all City grants that go through the NYC DOHMH. A Progressive Caucus, consisting mostly of members from the Working Families Party, was formed recently and is developing budget priorities.

Blood Donation: Lyndel Urbano spoke about GMHC's policy report on lifting the ban on blood donation by gay and bisexual men. The report argues that the time has come to review this regulation and also discusses what other

countries such as Russia do regarding this issue. Ultimately, this is a question for the FDA. A number of members of Congress including Anthony Weiner of Queens support overturning the ban. The ban also applies to sperm donation. Mr. Urbano agreed to send Dr. Rothschild GMHC's talking points on the gay blood ban, who will transform the talking points into a letter to FDA Commissioner Peggy Hamburg. The Planning Council will vote on whether to send the letter to Dr. Hamburg.

Public Comment: Kimberleigh Smith of Harlem United stated that three supportive housing streams are threatened by funding cuts. She agreed to send language to Dr. Rothschild regarding the cuts. Dr. Rothschild will write a letter, and the Planning Council will vote on sending the letter. Lucky Michaels noted that the population between ages 21-24 is being discharged from City-supported housing. Members of this group are being referred to DHS and to adult shelters, but DHS is diverting these individuals because they do not have sufficient room to house them. Committee Co-Chairs Matt Lesieur and Darryl Ng encouraged Mr. Michaels to testify at the City Council budget hearings. Ms. Lok noted that different programs define "youth" differently.

Committee members discussed the supportive housing situation in New York City. The Human Resources Administration did not show up to testify at a hearing on Section 8 vouchers. Today's *New York Times* states that New York has received an allocation of \$45 million for Section 8 housing.

Planning Council Funding: Mr. Ng noted that the New York EMA has received an increase of \$9.4 million in its grant from HRSA. Mr. Lesieur stated that the PSRA Committee is considering a laundry list of suggestions about where the extra money might go. PSRA Committee members have been asked to return to the next meeting on April 29th with specific information about what could be done with the money: for example, do the food programs have unmet need which could be alleviated by an increased allocation?

Review of the Minutes: The minutes from the most recent Policy Committee meeting on February 19th were passed by consensus.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.

Items for Follow-Up:

- Matthew Lesieur will forward the ABAC chart with the President's proposed budget to Nina Rothschild, who will distribute it to Committee members.
- Matt Lesieur will send e-mail addresses for the Senate and House Chairs of the Committees on Appropriations to Nina Rothschild who will send a letter asking for increased RW appropriations.

- Esther Lok and Lyndel Urbano will forward copies of letters from FPWA and GMHC on the NYS budget to Nina Rothschild, who will make them Planning Council-specific.
- Matt Lesieur/Darryl Ng will sign Charles Shorter up to provide testimony at NYC Council budget hearings.
- Lyndel Urbano will send GMHC's talking points on the ban on blood donations by MSM to Nina Rothschild, who will transform the talking points into a letter to FDA Commissioner Peggy Hamburg.
- Kimberleigh Smith will send language to Nina Rothschild for a letter on proposed funding cuts to supportive housing.