



FROM THE OFFICE OF MARGARET S. CHIN
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER – DISTRICT 1 MANHATTAN

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE • 250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1804, NY NY 10007 • (212) 788 - 7259
DISTRICT OFFICE • 165 PARK ROW, SUITE 11, NY NY 10038 • (212) 587 - 3159

****NEWS RELEASE**

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CONTACT:
KELLY MAGEE, DIRECTOR COMMUNICATIONS
(212) 788 – 7259
(917) 828 – 3634

Council Member Margaret Chin to introduce notification law for siting of methadone clinics in New York City

New York, NY – Tomorrow, Council Member Margaret Chin will introduce a law requiring that community boards receive notification about the siting of methadone clinics in their districts.

This law will require the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to notify the local community board and the City Council when they are first contacted by the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) regarding an application for certification of a methadone clinic. Currently, OASAS is only required to notify DOHMH of plans to establish a methadone clinic. Under current law, this satisfies the “community notification” requirement.

“OASAS requires that applicants for chemical dependency certification contact the local government unit and consider unmet need in the community for this type of service,” said Council Member Margaret Chin. “However, this doesn’t happen until late in the process. This law will ensure that community boards are notified early on about the proposed siting of chemical dependency services in their community.”

“Given the strong feelings that many communities have regarding clinics that dispense methadone within their neighborhoods, there is little incentive for applicants to inform the public that they are intending to open a clinic,” said Council Member Chin. “Local governments know their community best and they should have an opportunity to comment on whether the proposed siting is appropriate or needed.”

Council Member Chin introduced this law after a methadone clinic sought to relocate to 90 Maiden Lane in the Financial District. By the time the applicant made its presentation to the local community board, Community Board 1, the application already had conditional approval from OASAS, thus diminishing the community’s voice in the process. The application was eventually overturned due to public outcry over the lack of transparency in the process.

This bill will be introduced at the Stated Meeting on March 14, 2012.

A LOCAL LAW

To amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of health and mental hygiene to notify community boards and council members regarding applications to operate methadone clinics.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 1 of title 17 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 17-198 to read as follows:

§17-198 Notification to community boards and council members regarding methadone clinic applications. Within seven days of receiving notification of an application for certification of a methadone clinic from the New York office of alcoholism and substance abuse services, the department shall notify in writing the speaker of the council, and the community board and council member in whose district the proposed clinic will be located. Such notice shall include the address of the proposed methadone clinic and the name and address of the applicant.

§ 2. This local law shall take effect immediately.