



# THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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## **Speaker Quinn, Council Members Push to Expand Access to Quality Primary Care** *- Council to invest millions in new primary care facilities, state of the art technology -*

**Lower Manhattan** – With more than half of New York City communities facing significant shortages of primary care doctors, Speaker Christine C. Quinn and Council Members today announced a major effort to increase the number of primary care facilities in high-need communities. Under Speaker Quinn's proposal, unveiled during her State of the City Address last week, the City will invest over \$25 million over the next five years to create ten new clinics. Each state of the art clinic will offer high quality care, expertise in the cultural needs of the community and well-trained health care professionals.

Speaker Quinn was joined by Council Members Alan Gerson, Rosie Mendez, Joel Rivera, and Helen Sears for a tour of Betances Health Center in Lower Manhattan.

**Speaker Quinn** said, "The way we deliver health care in New York and across the country is upside down: too much money gets spent on expensive in-patient care once people get sick and not nearly enough gets spent on keeping us healthy. Investing in new primary care facilities will help the City save taxpayers' dollars by avoiding unnecessary emergency room visits. It will also help more New Yorkers access quality, affordable health care they deserve."

"The Betances Health Center, like so many other community health centers, would like to serve as many patients as possible, but are already bursting at the seams. With support from the Council, we would be able to increase essential services for patients in Brooklyn as well as in our Lower East Side location, and make sure that everyone receives the quality care they deserve," said **Wanda Evans, Executive Director of Betances Health Center**.

Community health centers have proven essential to preventing deadly and costly diseases. In fact, uninsured people living close to a community health center are less likely to postpone or delay seeking needed care, and less likely to have visited an emergency room compared to other uninsured persons.

And yet, more than 40 percent of New York City zip codes have over 3,000 Medicaid enrollees per 1 full time primary care physician.

To help ease that burden and improve the quality of care, the Council plans to create 10 new health care clinics in the communities with the most severe primary health care shortages. These providers will accept public health insurance, offer affordable services to the uninsured, endeavor to provide culturally competent care, and operate at hours that are convenient for patients. Grants will be

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provided directly to clinics to build and improve infrastructure and to offset start-up operating costs and assessments will be conducted to determine community need.

**Council Member Alan Gerson** said, "Locally available preventative medical care saves lives and money. Every New Yorker deserves a modern medical clinic nearby that offers high quality health care in a culturally sensitive manner. I endorse this initiative created by Speaker Quinn."

"We applaud the vision and leadership of Speaker Quinn in seeing the value that expanded primary will bring to the city's communities and in making the commitment to get it done. CHCANYS will work with the Speaker and her staff to make this vision a reality for all of New York City," said **Elizabeth Swain, Chief Executive Officer of the Community Health Care Association of New York State.**

**Councilwoman Rosie Mendez** added, "The old cliché is true – an ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure. This preventive care center not only provides many services that make New Yorkers healthier, from immunizations and diabetes testing to nutrition counseling and annual physicals, but for decades has provided a welcoming environment for the community on the Lower East Side. By preventing health problems at the first sign of trouble, not only will we improve the health of our citizens but we will save taxpayer money by averting costly medical services down the road."

"Betances is an example of the kind of primary care home every New Yorker deserves," said **Ronda Kotelchuck, Executive Director of the Primary Care Development Corporation.** "The Speaker has taken a giant step toward this goal by providing resources that will allow organizations like Betances to expand their capacity to meet the unmet needs of their communities. Her initiative is also a giant step toward restructuring of the health care system as called for by the Berger Commission and envisioned by the new Governor."

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