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

Brooklyn – With six City hospitals facing bankruptcy and five more slated to close in the next two years, Speaker Christine C. Quinn and Council Members today continued her push to invest millions of dollars in quality primary care for underserved communities. Under Speaker Quinn's proposal, unveiled during her State of the City Address, the City will invest over \$25 million over the next five years to create ten state-of-the-art health clinics. Each 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 Al Vann, Letitia James and Helen Sears for a tour of the Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center in Brooklyn.

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 hospital care once people get sick and not nearly enough gets spent on keeping us healthy. Investing in primary care 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."

Dr. Monica Sweeney, Vice President for Medical Affairs at the Health Center, said, "On behalf of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Family Health Center and the thousands of patients we serve annually, I'd like to thank Speaker Quinn for her commitment to improving access to primary and preventive health care in some of the city's most underserved areas. Today is a great day for the people in this community."

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, many communities in New York City lack access to community-based, preventive health care; 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, the Council plans to create ten 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 seek to operate at hours that are convenient for patients. Grants will be provided directly to clinics to build

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

Council Member Helen Sears said, "Primary care is a critical component of the health care system that significantly lowers the rate of preventable hospitalizations. Far too many New Yorkers do not have access to primary care and instead rely on emergency rooms, which are costlier and often less effective in managing long-term health issues."

Council Member Al Vann said, "Community health centers in central Brooklyn provide essential care to many New Yorkers who would have no where else to turn. At time when many of our hospitals are being forced to shut their doors because of financial concerns, we need to invest in these health centers and make sure that uninsured or underinsured New Yorkers can always find quality care."

"We applaud the vision and leadership of Speaker Quinn in seeing the value that expanded primary care 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.**

Majority Leader Joel Rivera said, "Primary health care doesn't only mean having a physician as one's regular source of care. It means having a strong relationship with a doctor who understands you and who makes you feel comfortable talking about your needs. The Council's initiative to increase the number of primary care facilities in our City is an important first step to closing the 'health-gap' that affects so many New Yorkers."

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