



A Memorandum for District 4
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Inequitable Access to Reproductive Health Care

Women's rights are human rights, and women's access to reproductive health care should be the rule, not the exception. In New York City, however, access to reproductive health care is currently not equitable, while at the federal level, we are faced with a Republican threat to funding for reproductive health care providers. A recent report by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene showed that women of color are 12 times more likely to die in childbirth than white women in New York City and for every woman who dies in childbirth in New York City, 100 face life-threatening childbirth complications.¹ Nationally, the rate of these complications increased from 74 to 163 per 10,000 deliveries between 1998 and 2011.² In New York City, the numbers are much worse. A recent Maternal Morbidity study by the New York City Health Department found the life-threatening complication rate climbing from 197 to 253 per 10,000 births between 2008 and 2012.³

¹Jensen, Rita Henley. "NYC Reports Black Moms' Risks 12 Times Above Whites." *Women's ENews*. Women's ENews, 23 Feb. 2016. Web. <http://womensenews.org/2015/09/nyc-reports-black-moms-risks-12-times-above-whites/>

²Creanga, Andreea A., Cynthia J. Berg, Jean Y. Ko, Sherry L. Farr, Van T. Tong, F. Carol Bruce, and William M. Callaghan. "Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in the United States: Where Are We Now?" *Journal of Women's Health*. Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., 01 Jan. 2014. Web. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3880915/>

³*Severe Maternal Morbidity in New York City, 2008–2012*. Rep. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2016. Web. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/maternal-morbidity-report-08-12.pdf>

The City must ensure that all women—regardless of income, age, race, immigration status, or marital status—have access to the family planning and reproductive health care services they need. Reproductive health care cannot be separated from the overall health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Affordable and accessible family planning services are essential to women's health, wellbeing and economic stability. According to the Guttmacher Institute, more than six in 10 women obtaining care at a publicly funded center providing contraceptive services consider the center to be their primary source of health care. For four in 10 women, that center may be their only source of health care.⁴ I support an investment in family planning, which will provide vital healthcare services to New York City families.

Additionally, as a New York City public middle school teacher, I witnessed firsthand the importance of sexual health education. Currently there is no consistent, comprehensive nor mandatory sex education curriculum in NYC public schools. At a time when rates of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) have dramatically increased, and two-thirds of all infections occur among adolescents,⁵ I support the creation of a comprehensive, age-appropriate reproductive health and sexuality education program to start in kindergarten and progress through the 12th grade.

In 2016 New York City Council unanimously passed a set of bills providing free menstrual hygiene products to public schools, prisons, and shelters, making New York the first

⁴"Publicly Funded Family Planning Services in the United States." *Guttmacher Institute*. Guttmacher Institute, 10 Oct. 2016. Web. <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/publicly-funded-family-planning-services-united-states>

⁵Walcott, Dennis M., and Kathleen Grimm. *HIV/AIDS Curriculum: A Supplement to a Comprehensive Health Curriculum*. Rep. Board of Education of the City of New York, 2012. Web. <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F90600AF-4A31-44D9-8AAE-1416681CC6CD/0/HIVAIDSEntireBook2012.pdf>

city in the nation to pass “menstrual equity” legislation.⁶ The City now budgets for tampons and sanitary pads just like it does for toilet paper and hand soap.⁷ This is a huge step in the right direction for the women of New York City, however, a gap still exists for girls in middle and elementary school. When elected to the City Council, I will advocate for expanding this program into our middle and elementary schools, so that it can serve all girls, and in particular those for whom menstruation at an early age might be particularly sensitive issue.

⁶Rinkunas, Susan. "We're One Step Closer to Free Tampons and Pads in NYC Public Schools, Prisons, and Shelters." *The Cut*. New York Media, LLC., 22 Mar. 201. Web. <https://www.thecut.com/2016/03/new-york-city-bill-free-tampons-pads-in-public-schools-shelters-prisons.html>

⁷Rinkunas, Susan. "We're One Step Closer to Free Tampons and Pads in NYC Public Schools, Prisons, and Shelters." *The Cut*. New York Media, LLC., 22 Mar. 201. Web. <https://www.thecut.com/2016/03/new-york-city-bill-free-tampons-pads-in-public-schools-shelters-prisons.html>