
Planned Parenthood of New York City

**Planned Parenthood of New York City
Testimony on Examining the City's Effort to Prevent the Human Papillomavirus and Decrease Risk
for Cancer**

January 8, 2015

Good afternoon. I am Julienne Verdi, Director of Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC). I am pleased to be here today to provide testimony on New York City's effort to prevent the human papillomavirus and decrease New Yorkers' risk for cancer. Planned Parenthood of New York City thanks our strong supporters Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chair of the Committee on Health the Honorable Council Member Corey Johnson, and the Chair of the Committee on Women's Issues the Honorable Council Member Laurie Cumbo for their leadership in convening this hearing. We'd also like to thank the Committee on Health, Committee on Women's Issues and the entire City Council for their dedication to these issues and we welcome the opportunity to discuss ways we can boost access to care and improve health outcomes for all New Yorkers.

Planned Parenthood of New York City serves more than 50,000 patients annually in our health centers currently located in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island and the Bronx. We are also proud to announce that a new health care center in Queens is under construction and is due to open in May of 2015. PPNYC provides sexual and reproductive health services including birth control; emergency contraception; gynecological care (including cervical and breast cancer screenings); colposcopy; male reproductive health exams; testing, counseling, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections; the HPV vaccine; HIV testing and counseling; pregnancy testing, options counseling (including adoption) and abortion. As a trusted sexual and reproductive health care provider in New York City, we know firsthand the effects of the human papillomavirus on New Yorkers and understand the importance of passing supportive legislation and raising awareness to stop the spread of this infection and decrease risk for cancer.

By recognizing January as Cervical Health Awareness Month, we can increase knowledge of ways to prevent and treat cervical cancer in New York. Every year, more than 12,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and more than 4,000 American women die of the disease. Latinas and African-American women have higher rates of cervical cancer than other groups and are also more likely to die of the disease. However, cervical cancer is highly preventable—regular Pap screenings can help detect precancerous cells, allowing women to receive treatment before cancer develops. Also, when cervical cancer is found early, it is often treatable and associated with a high survival rate. Moreover, as many as 7 out of 10 cases of cervical cancer are caused by two strains of the Genital Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and since 2006 a vaccine has been available to prevent the strains of HPV associated with cervical cancer cases. The CDC estimates that as many as 93% of cervical cancers could be prevented by regular screening and HPV vaccination. PPNYC is proud to provide Pap screenings, the HPV vaccine and colposcopies to our patients to help prevent and diagnose cervical cancer. Specifically in 2013, PPNYC provided 88,700 STI tests and over 8,500 Pap screenings to our patients.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. We know that while the majority of HPV infections will resolve on their own within two years of infection, some of these infections do not and can lead to serious health problems such as genital warts, cervical cancer and other types of cancer. The CDC estimates that about 33,200 HPV-associated cancers occur in the U.S. each year. The majority, about 20,600 occur among females, and about 12,600 occur among males. Cervical cancer is the most common HPV-associated cancer. However, HPV is also thought to be responsible for more than 90% of anal cancers, about 70% of vaginal and vulvar cancers, and more than 60% of penile cancers. Recent studies have also shown that approximately 70% of cancers of the oropharynx (cancers of the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils) may also be linked to HPV.

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The HPV vaccine is administered through three shots over a period of six months. Patients should be given all three shots in order to be fully protected. Studies have shown that in the limited amount of time that the vaccine has been available there has been over a 50% reduction of cervical cancer cases in the U.S. and more than a 30% reduction in genital warts among adolescent girls. Despite the success rate of the vaccine, the CDC found that HPV vaccination is shockingly low in the U.S. and that many patients are not receiving the full three dose series.

Legislation currently pending in the New York State legislature sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger and Assembly Member Amy Paulin would address prevention of STIs and clarify New York State law, allowing for competent minors to consent to the HPV vaccine. California passed a similar law in 2011. While we encourage parents to be involved in their children's health care decisions, not all minors have healthy, safe family relationships. Some minors are unable or reluctant to involve their parents in their sexual and reproductive health care. PPNYC recognizes that mandating parental consent could deter minors from accessing critical preventive services such as the HPV vaccine.

PPNYC supports the City Council Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass legislation clarifying the law to permit health care practitioners to provide services to youth for the prevention of HPV without parental consent. As a trusted sexual and reproductive health provider, we know the best way to ensure that young people won't become infected with HPV is by vaccinating before they are exposed to the virus. Since most people are exposed to the virus through sexual contact, getting the vaccine before the onset of sexual activity is best practice and it is therefore essential that minors have access to the vaccine. Minors in New York State are already able to consent to treatment and testing for STIs. Minors should also have access to services that can prevent them from ever contracting potentially life-threatening STIs in the first place.

In addition to the resolutions, PPNYC reiterates its call for comprehensive sexual health education in all New York City schools. Gaps remain in New York City's sexual health education, which has a significant impact on young people's health and well-being. As the largest metropolitan area in the United States, New York City has an opportunity to become a leader in comprehensive sexual education. Preventing the spread of STIs, including HPV, among our youth begins with providing information to empower students to make the best decisions that are right for them. Comprehensive sexual health education must teach not just the basic prevention lessons, but also healthy relationships and consent, communication skills, condom negotiation, LGBT inclusivity and cultural competency.

Lastly, we applaud New York's commitment to implementing the Affordable Care Act. As part of the ACA, more Americans now have access to the care they need, including Pap screening, testing for STIs, and the HPV vaccine—all covered without having to pay out of pocket for copays and other expenses. PPNYC has ensured that all of our entitlement staff are Certified Application Counselors and offer one-to-one counseling and enrollment in both the public and private insurance programs on the New York State of Health portal. However, we also know that many New Yorkers are still ineligible for health care coverage under the ACA. Ensuring care for all New Yorkers is imperative from both a human rights and public health stance. We look forward to working together to make New York City a national model for health care access for all people.

At PPNYC, we see the often, harmful consequences of HPV infection among our patients and we are dedicated to providing professional, nonjudgmental, confidential care no matter what. By passing both resolutions, increasing access to care for those ineligible for coverage under the ACA, and ensuring that all students receive comprehensive sexual health education, we can send an important signal that New York City is committed to raising awareness, stopping the spread of HPV, decreasing cancer risk, and reducing health care disparities in our City. We urge the New York City Council to pass these important

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resolutions and call on the New York State legislature to pass legislation clarifying providers' ability to administer the HPV vaccine to consenting competent minors without parental consent.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue and I would be happy to take any questions or provide additional information.

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Since 1916, Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC) has been an advocate for and provider of reproductive health services and education for New Yorkers. Serving nearly 50,000 clients annually, PPNYC's health care centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Staten Island offer reproductive health services, including gynecological care, contraception, pregnancy testing, abortion, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and HIV testing and counseling. Through a threefold mission of clinical services, education, and advocacy, PPNYC brings better health and more fulfilling lives to each new generation of New Yorkers. As a voice for reproductive freedom, PPNYC supports legislation and policies to ensure that all New Yorkers—and, in fact, people around the world—will have access to the full range of reproductive health care services and information.