

TO: HONORABLE BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

Your Committee is in receipt of a communication from the County Executive urging the adoption of the attached “LOCAL LAW amending Section 277.421 of the Laws of Westchester County to add a provision to establish a Subcommittee of the Westchester County African-American Advisory Board to study the high rates of asthma in communities of color in the County of Westchester.”

Your Committee is aware that, according to a recent Westchester County Department of Health Community Health Assessment, slightly over 10% of adults within the County reported having asthma (2018 – 10.8, 2021 – 7.5). Additionally, the New York State 2021 Health Equity Reports—which present data on health outcomes for cities and towns with a 40% or greater non-White population—highlight the prevalence of asthma in communities of color in Westchester County. These reports show that the rates of emergency hospital visits for asthma in Yonkers, Peekskill, and Mt. Vernon typically exceeded both the New York State and Westchester County averages, for all ages of patients. Notably, the rates for patients ages 0-4 years in Yonkers, Peekskill and Mt. Vernon substantially exceeded the state and county averages.

Your Committee understands that asthma is a treatable disease, but that access to healthcare for ethnic minorities and communities of color is often hampered by socioeconomic disparities, shortages of primary care physicians in minority communities, and language and literacy barriers, among other things. Clear disparities have emerged, showing that the burden of asthma falls disproportionately on African American, Black, and Hispanic populations, and especially on children in these communities. In recent years, children have died preventable deaths in the County as a result of untreated asthma.

Your Committee is informed that this Local Law, if adopted, would create a Subcommittee of the African American Advisory Board, to study asthma risk factors for people of color in Westchester County; identify existing barriers to asthma treatment and care among racial and ethnic minorities; develop strategies for addressing the lack of health care in these communities; and launch a County-wide asthma awareness campaign to educate County residents about the disease, its symptoms, and the ability to better manage asthma through prevention and treatment. The subcommittee would be required to consult with the Hispanic Advisory Board and the Asian-American Advisory Board, as well as representatives from other groups that are disproportionately affected by asthma. The subcommittee would also be required to meet with a pulmonologist and any other necessary medical specialists.

Your Committee is informed that the proposed project does not meet the definition of an action under New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”) and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR Part 617. Please refer to the memorandum from the Department of Planning, dated January 12, 2023, which is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Legislators. Your Committee concurs in this conclusion.

Based on the foregoing, your Committee recommends the passage of this Local Law.

Dated: _____, 2023
White Plains, New York

COMMITTEE ON

RESOLUTION NO. ____ – 2023

RESOLVED, that this Board hold a public hearing pursuant to Section 209.141(4) of the Laws of Westchester County on Local Law Intro. No. ____ - 2023, entitled “A LOCAL LAW amending Section 277.421 of the Laws of Westchester County to add a provision to establish a Subcommittee of the Westchester County African-American Advisory Board to study the high rates of asthma in communities of color in the County of Westchester.” The public hearing will be held at __.m. on the _____ day of _____, 2023 in the Chambers of the Board of Legislators, 8th Floor, Michaelian Office Building, White Plains, New York. The Clerk of the Board shall cause notice of the time and date of such hearing to be published at least once in one or more newspapers published in the County of Westchester and selected by the Clerk of the Board for that purpose in the manner and time required by law.