

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.

BE IT ENACTED by the County Board of the County of Westchester as follows:

Section 1. Section 277.421 of the Laws of Westchester County is hereby amended by adding a subsection to subdivision (1) to read as follows:

Sec. 277.421. - Advisory Board established.

1. There shall be a Westchester County African-American Advisory Board which shall consist of an odd number of members of not less than nine, and not more than 45. The members shall have demonstrated their concern for and interest in the African-American population.

a. Members shall be appointed by the County Executive and shall serve for a term of two years, except that of the members first appointed to such board, 60 percent shall be appointed for a term of one year and 40 percent for a term of two years. Upon the expiration of the term of office of any member, his or her successor shall be appointed to membership on such board for a term of two years. Any member subsequently appointed to the board shall be appointed for a two-year term. The Director of the Office of Affirmative Action may serve as an ex officio member at the discretion of the board. Members shall be residents of Westchester County. One member shall be designated by the County Executive as Chairman. A vacancy in the membership shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

b. Each member shall have the ability and willingness to give the necessary amount of time to the responsibility of being a board member.

c. A Subcommittee shall be established to study the high rates of asthma in minority communities in Westchester County. The County Executive shall appoint five (5) members to such Subcommittee from among Advisory Board members. The County Commissioners of Health, Social Services and Planning or their designees shall serve as Ex-Officio members of such Subcommittee.

The Subcommittee shall be tasked with:

(i) assessing the asthma risk factors for the minority

residents of the County;

(ii) identifying existing barriers to quality asthma treatment and care among

racial and ethnic minorities;

(iii) developing evidence-based intervention strategies for addressing the lack of

health care in these communities; and

(iv) launching 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 shall consult with representatives of minority and

low-income communities, health care professionals with knowledge and

experience in the prevention and treatment of asthma, and community

groups that advocate for environmental justice issues. The Subcommittee shall deliver an

annual report addressing various asthma program successes, new trends, data and issues

surrounding minority populations suffering from asthma to the County Executive and Board of Legislators beginning September 1, 2025, and annually thereafter.

§ 2. This Local Law shall take effect immediately.

EANY SUPPORTS

Environmental

Advocates

NY

Memo #14

Addressing Asthma in Communities of Color

[A.5828 \(Reyes, et al.\)](#)

[S.410-A \(Biaggi, et al.\)](#)

Explanation:

This bill will help address the long-standing and chronic issue of disproportionate rates of asthma in communities of color by requiring the Department of Health to create a Minority Coordinating Council on Asthmatic Affairs. The Council will assess asthma risk factors in communities of color, identify existing treatment barriers in these communities, develop intervention strategies and implement an asthma awareness campaign.

According to the World Health Organization, about half of asthma cases are due to environmental factors. Environmental risk factors for asthma include indoor and outdoor allergens like air pollution, smoke, chemical irritants, dust, mold, and pollen. Particle pollution, specifically particulate matter 2.5, is [the largest environmental risk factor](#) in the United States, and has been linked to the development of asthma in children. [The majority of airborne](#) pollution is a result of the combustion of fossil fuels for transportation, power plants and industries.

Asthma rates are disproportionately high among people of color, with Black children almost twice as likely to develop asthma than white children according to the [New York State Department of Health](#). These high asthma rates in communities of color are closely linked with areas of high air pollution. The West Bronx is the most polluted census tract in the Northeast, where more than [90% of residents](#) are people of color, and children in the Bronx [are twice as likely](#) to be hospitalized for asthma, and more likely to die of asthma.

Asthma rates in communities of color can be prevented and reduced in part by reducing air pollution within those communities. By creating a Minority Coordinating Council on Asthmatic Affairs, the Department of Health in coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation, will be able to recommend localized solutions to reducing air pollution which will result in lower asthma rates and healthier communities. The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) requires state agencies to consider the impact that a decision will have on disadvantaged communities and the impact on the climate. The work of this Council will complement the CLCPA by demonstrating how harmful pollution is to the health of New Yorkers, and how especially deadly it continues to be for communities of color.

Summary:

This bill would establish a Minority Coordinating Council on Asthmatic Affairs within the Department of Health. The Council will assess asthma risk factors for residents of color within the state, identify barriers to treatment and care, develop intervention strategies and create an awareness and education campaign to manage asthma rates in communities of color through prevention and treatment. Members of the Council would include representatives from low-income communities of color, healthcare professionals, and leaders from environmental justice groups.