



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMUNITY BOARD 9
MANHATTAN**

Morningside Heights
Manhattanville
Hamilton Heights
Sugar Hill

3291/3295 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Phone: (212)864-6200 Email:
info@cb9m.org

March 24, 2025

Hon. Charles E. Schumer
US Senator for New York
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand
US Senator for New York
478 Russell
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand,

At its regularly scheduled General Board Meeting held in hybrid on Thursday, March 20th, 2025, Manhattan Community Board No. 9 passed the following Letter of Support Re: FY 2026 Congressionally Directed Spending Request (CDSR) submitted by CUNY SPH Center for Innovation in Mental Health (CUNY CIMH) by vote of unanimous consent with 30 members present.

We are writing today to express our strong support for the FY 2026 Congressionally Directed Spending Request (CDSR) submitted by the CUNY School of Public Health (CUNY SPH) Center for Innovation in Mental Health (CUNY CIMH). This critical funding will support the development and implementation of a Community Care Model for Mental Health Wellness, aimed at expanding equitable mental health access and strengthening community resilience.

There is an urgent need to increase access to mental health services, particularly in historically underserved communities where traditional healthcare infrastructure has been insufficient. This proposal is a timely and necessary response to the growing mental health crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic inequities. It has the potential to transform mental health access and improve overall well-being across New York City and beyond.

CUNY CIMH has consistently demonstrated expertise in mental health task-sharing, an evidence-based approach that empowers non-clinical professionals—such as community leaders, educators, and peer support specialists—to deliver essential services. Their successful programs, including Harlem Strong ([Harlem Strong - Center for Innovation in Mental Health - CUNY](#)),

Building Resilience in Youth, and Jobs Plus, showcase their ability to expand access to mental healthcare, improve service quality, and strengthen community resilience.

The Community Care Model for Mental Health Wellness will build upon these successes by refining task-sharing to meet the unique needs of diverse communities. This initiative will address critical gaps in mental health care, particularly in underserved areas, by Initiated by CB9 Health and Environment Committee, 3/3/

leveraging community networks to integrate mental health and wellness support into neighborhoods. It will include scalable training materials to help communities identify mental health concerns, provide timely interventions, and connect individuals to resources. This initiative will increase access to care, reduce stigma, and foster a culture of trust and support while building resilience in vulnerable populations.

As part of Harlem Strong, CUNY CIMH has worked closely with Manhattan Community Board 9 (MCB9) and our elected officials, community-based organizations, local businesses, and other key stakeholders to develop a multisectoral approach that addresses the syndetic risks of mental health disparities, social determinants of health, institutional racism, and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. This collaborative effort is rooted in a shared commitment to closing gaps in care and ensuring that Harlem residents have access to high-quality, culturally responsive mental health services.

Through our joint efforts, Harlem Strong has successfully integrated mental health resources into existing community support structures, increasing accessibility and fostering a neighborhood-based approach to care. The expansion of this model through the proposed Community Care Model for Mental Health Wellness will allow us to further develop and sustain these critical partnerships, ensuring that mental health services are woven into the fabric of everyday community life.

Community Board 9's initiatives are community-driven, ensuring that they reflect the needs and voices of West Harlem residents, working collaboratively with our community partners and are aimed at creating lasting positive change in our community's health landscape.

We value our relationship with CUNY SPH and view this opportunity to further enhance our partnership. I am confident that our communities—and many others—will benefit from this expansion of the mental health task-sharing approach, bringing critical services to underserved areas while increasing the size and availability of the mental health workforce. I strongly encourage you to advance this proposal to the Appropriations Committee and champion its success throughout the legislative process.

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Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand

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If you have any questions and/or further information is needed, please do not hesitate contacting me or District Manager, Eutha Prince, at the board office (212) 864-6200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Victor Edwards".

Victor Edwards
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 9

cc:

Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor
Hon. Brad Lander, NYC Comptroller
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Cordell Cleare, NYS Senator, 30th Senatorial District
Hon. Micah C. Lasher, NYS Assemblyman, 69th Assembly District
Hon. Jordan J.G. Wright, NYS Assemblyman, 70th Assembly District
Hon. Al Taylor, NYS Assemblyman, 71st Assembly District
Hon. Shaun Abreu, Member of the NYC Council, 7th Council District
Hon. Yusef Salaam, Member NYC Council, 9th Council District
Mr. Zead Ramadan, Exec. Director, West Harlem Development Corp
Ms. Deborah A. Levine, LCSW, Director, Harlem Health Initiative



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At its regularly scheduled General Board Meeting held in hybrid on Thursday, March 20th, 2025, Manhattan Community Board No. 9 passed the following Letter of Support Re: FY 2026 Congressionally Directed Spending Request (CDSR) submitted by CUNY SPH to create a new Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Training Hub (PHEPR-TH) by vote of unanimous consent with 30 members present.

On behalf of Manhattan Community Board 9, I write to express our support for the FY 2026 Congressionally Directed Spending Request (CDSR) submitted by CUNY SPH. With this funding, CUNY SPH will create a new Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Training Hub (PHEPR-TH).

As of 2023, the U.S. public health workforce needed 80,000 additional full-time workers in state and local settings, primarily in health departments, to provide core services. An additional loss of 129,000 workers is projected by this year, with updated data expected in summer 2025. Even more public health workers, who are typically not counted in official reports, are needed in non-governmental organizations. In New York State alone, a 2022 workforce study by the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) revealed a 26% decline in full-time local health department (LHD) employees since 2019, with temporary federal and state emergency funding creating an unstable influx of short-term staff for COVID-19 response efforts. As these employees are not permanent and leave when funding runs out, LHDs will face a significant loss of staff and experience, even as they continue to manage current, emergent, and unforeseen public health threats. More than ever, this entire workforce needs training in public health and healthcare emergency response and preparedness.

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CUNY SPH's PHEPR-TH is uniquely positioned to meet demand in the current and future public health workforce. PHEPR-TH will be available to graduate students, public health and safety professionals, and community members who wish to develop or strengthen their skills and credentials for career advancement to address future emergencies with a sound scientific basis. The PHEPR-TH will establish a new certificate program in Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response at CUNY SPH that can serve the growing need for training in PHEPR among the public health and healthcare workforce that is unique in its curriculum and community connections. The PHEPR-TH will expand CUNY SPH program offerings, attract new students to public health, further career and professional training for graduate students and professionals, and fill a major gap in the public health and healthcare workforce. Moreover, given CUNY SPH's strong online curriculum, this training will be accessible locally, nationally, and internationally, broadening its reach.

The New York City (NYC) Pandemic Response Institute (PRI) is a resource supporting New York City agencies, organizations, and communities to prepare and respond to critical public health crises as:

- ✦ **An innovator** that explores technologies, tools, models, and other approaches to prepare and respond to public health crises.
- ✦ **A connector** that brings together diverse city stakeholders to create a whole-of-city response inclusive of governmental agencies, the private sector, community organizations, and academic and research entities.
- ✦ **A facilitator**, supporting distillation of lessons learned to inform future preparedness, response, and recovery from major health crises.

CUNY SPH works with MCB 9 and its CBOs, block associations, local businesses, elected officials, and community stakeholders in support of this Letter of Support regarding the FY 2026 Congressionally Directed Spending Request (CDSR) submitted by CUNY SPH to create the Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Training Hub (PHEPRTH).

Federal funding is vital for CUNY SPH to launch the training hub, and will support our constituents with:

- Increased access to knowledge and skills that are in demand from employers,
- Training to fill current and future positions paying living wages in the public health workforce, and
- Increased ability to serve their community and protect its well-being in times of acute need.

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We value our relationship with CUNY SPH and view this opportunity to further enhance our partnership. We are confident that our communities, and many others, will benefit from the increased workforce training PHEPR-TH will provide, both as participants and as recipients of the services those trained can offer. I encourage you to move this proposal forward to the Appropriations Committee and vigorously support it throughout the process.

If you have any questions and/or further information is needed, please do not hesitate contacting me or District Manager, Eutha Prince, at the board office (212) 864-6200.

Sincerely,

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Victor Edwards
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