



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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COUNCIL MEMBERS CHIN, JOHNSON AND KOO JOIN HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND ADVOCATES TO LAUNCH FIRST-EVER NYC HEPATITIS B AWARENESS WEEK

Today, Council Members Margaret Chin, Corey Johnson and Peter Koo joined Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, the Chinese American Medical Society and healthcare advocates to proclaim July 21 to 27 as the first-ever New York City Hepatitis B Awareness Week. The effort is aimed at building hepatitis B awareness among the public, especially within Asian communities, renewing support for people living with the disease, and encouraging all New Yorkers to learn their status and receive the hepatitis B vaccine.

Approximately 100,000 NYC residents are currently living with chronic hepatitis B, many of whom have not been diagnosed and are not receiving the medical care they need. Around two-thirds of NYC's newly reported hepatitis B infections occur in immigrants from Asian countries where the virus is moderately or highly endemic. Nationwide, 1 in 12 Asian Americans are infected with chronic hepatitis B.

Chronic hepatitis B can damage the liver for up to 20-30 years without symptoms, and can lead to end-stage liver diseases such as cirrhosis or liver cancer in 1 in 4 infected individuals if left undetected and untreated. Hepatitis B is completely preventable with immunization and health outcomes can significantly improve with treatment. To that end, public awareness is essential to stop the spread of the virus and improve the health of those living with chronic hepatitis B.

As part of today's event, Council Members Chin presented the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center — a leader in the fight against viral hepatitis — with a City Council proclamation to officially designate the first-ever NYC Hepatitis B Awareness Week. Along with Council Members Johnson and Koo, the proclamation was also signed by Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Council Members Rosie Mendez and Paul Vallone.

Supporting and promoting the first-ever NYC Hepatitis B Awareness Week is part of the broader effort currently being undertaken by Council Members Chin, Johnson, and Koo to fight viral hepatitis in immigrant communities and throughout New York City. The three Council members have led that charge by introducing legislation to require the City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to publish an annual report on its efforts to identify and prevent the spread of hepatitis B and C. That bill recently received a hearing before the Council's Committee on Health, which Johnson chairs. Council Members Chin, Johnson and Koo also successfully championed a \$750,000 hepatitis treatment initiative that was funded in June as part of the City's Fiscal Year 2015 budget.

NYC HEPATITIS B AWARENESS WEEK EVENTS:

Tuesday, July 22, 5:30-7:30pm

Hepatitis B Educational Seminar, FREE and open to the public

At NYU Langone Medical Center, Smilow Multipurpose Room (455 First Avenue, First Floor)

—This seminar, led by Dr. Vinh Pham, infectious disease specialist at Bellevue Hospital, will focus on hepatitis B testing, disease progression, and medical management. The event specifically seeks to engage healthcare professionals and health profession students in discussion, but any members of the public are welcome and encouraged to participate.

Thursday, July 24, 7-9pm

**“Another Life” Documentary Screening and Panel Discussion, FREE and open to the public
At CUNY Asian American Research Institute (25 West 43rd Street, 18th Floor)**

—“Another Life” reveals the impact of hepatitis B through the stories of eight families in the US and China. The evening will also include an interactive discussion with Dr. Su Wang, medical director for the Chinese Medical Program at Saint Barnabas Medical Center in New Jersey, who will address the complex issues surrounding hepatitis B, including health policy efforts, cultural misconceptions, and the need for advocacy.

Friday July 25, 12-1pm

**Sit-In to Build Awareness, FREE and open to the public
Washington Square Park**

—This public, direct action event will bring healthcare advocates and community members together to show signs and share their stories to spread awareness about the silent epidemic of hepatitis B.

(Following NYC Hepatitis B Awareness Week, World Hepatitis Day will take place on Monday, July 28.)

“Hepatitis B is a silent killer because most people usually have no symptoms, and 2 out of 3 people with Hep B do not know they are infected,” **said Dr. Vivian Huang, Hepatitis B Program Director at Charles B. Wang Community Health Center.** “In NYC, there are over 100,000 cases of Hep B (similar to the number of cases of HIV/AIDS), and possibly many more are infected but do not know it. To increase screening, awareness and education on Hep B, TeamHBV NYC, CBWCHC and NYC Hep B Coalition has launched the first-ever NYC Hep B Awareness Week and we applaud City Council and Council Member Chin for their support to fight Hep B and helping NYC #Baware! Get tested, know your status, seek medical care if you need it and have peace of mind for yourself and loved ones.”

“One in twelve Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) is living with chronic hepatitis B and as many as two out of three AAPIs with chronic hepatitis B are unaware of their status,” **said Dr. Warren Chin, Executive Director of the Chinese American Medical Society.** “Without appropriate medical treatment, one out of four will die of cirrhosis and liver cancer. Chronic hepatitis B and hepatocellular cancer is the single greatest health disparity between AAPIs and Caucasian Americans. We are encouraging not only community members at risk to get tested but also informing our physicians and healthcare providers to make an effort to test all their patients at risk.”

“As we recognize the grave impact hepatitis B has on New York City and especially on our Asian communities, we know we must take action,” **said Council Member Margaret Chin.** “Joining with healthcare providers and advocates to launch the first-ever NYC Hepatitis B Awareness Week is another step in our collaborative effort to combat viral hepatitis in vulnerable communities across the city. We’re pushing for legislation, funding and general awareness to make sure that all members of the public have access to every tool in the fight against hepatitis.”

“Hepatitis B is entirely preventable and we need to make more New Yorkers aware of that,” **said Council Member Corey Johnson, chair of the Council’s Committee on Health.** “It is a disease that disproportionately affects Asian and gay communities, and this awareness week will help to educate folks about the importance of being vaccinated and also lend support to people who are living with the disease. Everyone, not just the populations who are at a greater risk of infection, should get tested and know their status.”

“Hepatitis B impacts all ages, races, and ethnic groups; however it disproportionately affects immigrant, minority, and socially marginalized populations,” **said Council Member Peter Koo.** “It is a very serious disease and is often asymptomatic until it’s too late. I encourage those who are at risk to speak with their doctors. Prevention, education, and awareness are key in combating viral hepatitis.”

“Hepatitis B is a serious disease that affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, including 1 in 12 Asian Americans,” **said Council Member Paul Vellone.** “We must continue to raise awareness and educate the public about this disease, and I applaud Council Member Chin for working towards that goal and designating this week as NYC Hepatitis B Week.”

“It is essential that we increase the awareness of hepatitis B in New York City,” **said Council Member Rosie Mendez.** “With approximately 100,000 New York City residents living with chronic hepatitis B, it is imperative that we continue to educate New Yorkers of what they can do to learn about their status and where to go to get needed services. We must ensure that New Yorkers have access to the proper resources and treatment to live a sustainable and healthy life.”