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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

Mayor Fulop Expands Women’s Healthcare, Improving Public Health & Health Equity in Partnership with Planned Parenthood

Jersey City’s Women Empowerment Pilot Program Helps Hundreds of Low- and No-Income Families get Much-Needed Medical Care

JERSEY CITY, NJ – Mayor Steven M. Fulop and the **Department of Health and Human Services** are introducing a resolution to the **City Council** this week to significantly expand Jersey City’s successful and innovative pilot partnership with Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan New Jersey, *increasing access to critical healthcare services for women and children living below the poverty line.*

Since the June 2022 launch of the Women’s Empowerment: Education and Services (WEES) pilot, over 300 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants in Jersey City have received life-changing services ranging from emergency visits to general checkups. This week’s resolution utilizes a \$30,000 grant awarded to HHS to increase the number of patients served and create an informative, step-by-step WEES replication toolkit for other municipalities and organizations to mirror - ultimately increasing access on a much broader level to vital preventative health services for those who need it most.

“Our pilot program has been an incredible success as it is a natural extension of the mission of the Jersey City WIC program to provide much-needed reproductive support to our community, and to take it a step further, we include transportation to ensure these critical services are accessible to all,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “This partnership serves as a prime example of how two organizations can work together to expand the scope of critical services and the reach of resources, and there has never been a more crucial time to make these services accessible than now. We want to double down on this proven successful investment to help even more women and children by growing these services and providing greater access to the quality health care that everyone deserves.”

Expanding the WEES program also includes LBGTQ Training Programming with Jersey City Leaders as well as Recreation and Youth Development staff, and establishes a Train the Trainer program under the Division of Community Health and Wellness.

Stacey Flanagan is the Director of HHS and has been the lead on this pilot program for Jersey City. “This partnership has serviced more than 20% of Jersey City WIC’s eligible (adult female) clientele. As encouraging as these numbers are, they don’t even begin to quantify the true scope of this partnership. To date, more than 20% of the individuals who received these services were referred to other community partners, including Medicaid, which help them get other affordable services they might not otherwise receive.”

Reliable transportation is a top social determinant surrounding residents’ health, which is why we will continue free transportation under the WEES program to encourage more low- and no-income families to seek vital medical care who may otherwise be deterred from such a barrier.

"In partnership with Jersey City's HHS, PPMNJ has seen great success in serving patients through its WIC program. We are committed to this continued strategic partnership that has opened critical access to people seeking sexual and reproductive health access in Hudson County. This type of community engagement and partnership provides the essential tools for breaking down barriers to better healthcare access," added **Dr. Randa Francis-Nicholas, Vice President of Health Services for Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan New Jersey.**

With the Council’s approval, this week’s resolution will allocate grant funding awarded to HHS from the Clinical Services Division Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE). It is one of many grants HHS has been awarded recently as a result of the Department’s effectiveness and leadership, especially in a post-pandemic environment.

In addition to the WEES program, HHS recently completed the HealthierJC mini-grant RFP process to allocate a total of over \$434,000 in Enhancing Local Public Health Infrastructure (ELPHI) and Congressional Appropriation for Workforce Development funding to support 50 local nonprofit organizations. In fact, all eligible applicants received funding. Jersey City’s HHS applied for the ELPHI grants through the New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials.

The grants, worth upwards of \$15,000, will provide much-needed financial assistance to various local nonprofits offering a range of community services from supporting workforce development programming and food pantries to youth development and resource centers.

“These funds further the City’s reach in communities supporting health equity, neighborhood by neighborhood,” concluded Mayor Fulop.

All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Scalcione at KScalcione@icnj.org.