



BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON

**Testimony of Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson
New York City Council Committee on Hospitals
February 29, 2024**

Thank you to Chair Narcisse and the members of the Committee on Hospitals for convening this important hearing today to address the healthcare staffing crisis, examining current conditions, and worker concerns. All our residents, doctors, nurses, advocates, and healthcare staff must feel supported for the invaluable difference they make in keeping our communities healthy. They have a right to a safe working environment, personal and work-life balance, and fair compensation.

As Borough President, I am proud to stand with all our healthcare heroes and sheroes, I have always championed alongside them at rallies calling for a fair contract, pay equity, and safe working conditions for our nurses, residents, physicians, and fellows. The doctors that care for us, our families, our neighbors are struggling to care for themselves and their own families. No one should have to live with housing insecurity and chronic financial stress, and it's especially shameful to put our city's healthcare workers in this position.

Public sector healthcare professionals face crisis-level understaffing, which has a negative impact on patients. Understaffing has only gotten worse since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated the effect on health workers and facilities who are overworked and exhausted.

This is a historic system with a rich legacy, and CIR physicians have been at the center of that history since our city's public hospital residents first unionized in 1957. Since then, these doctors have consistently fought to make our public hospitals the best that they can be for the people of this city and against austerity and divestment from this critical system.

Resident well-being is patient well-being. Nearly half of resident physicians develop burnout during training and 25% develop clinical depression. It is tragic that suicide is the leading cause of death for male residents and the second leading cause of death for female residents. H+H residents have been making public demands for fair pay and highlighting the devastating impact low wages are already beginning to have on H+H's ability to recruit the highest caliber of diverse physicians.

We need fair funding for New York City's safety net hospitals, so they are not only able to meet the staffing shortage but attract and retain a diverse workforce for years to come. Healthcare is a human right, and everyone deserves humane, compassionate care. NYC Health + Hospitals should continue to lead the way in what this type of care can look like for everyone. Thank you again to the members of the Council who participated in this hearing today. New York City should lead the country in taking care of the health of our communities and that starts with supporting the people providing that care!