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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.