



Healthcare Policy Roundup

May 8, 2018

Catch the Highlights!

- *City to implement rule requiring food retailers to post calories on menus*
- *De Blasio supports pilot of four supervised injection facilities following report*
- *Congressman introduces bill protecting student veterans from housing discrimination*

Questions? Comments?

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City to require food establishments to indicate calories:

On Monday, New York City Health Commissioner Mary Bassett announced plans to implement a long-awaited menu labelling rule following the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) recent [approval](#) of a nationwide regulation. The new rule would require certain food retailers to display calories next to their menu items and provide additional nutrition information on request.

The city attempted to implement the rule last August, but was delayed after the National Restaurant Association and the National Association of Convenience Stores filed a lawsuit accusing the city of preempting federal guidelines. Following the FDA's announcement, NYC will now be able to require chain restaurants, movie theaters, and grocery stores with over 15 locations to disclose calorie information next to each menu item.

The new rule is expected to affect about 3,300 restaurants and 1,500 grocery stores and convenience stores throughout the city. Noncompliant retailers may face up to \$600 in fines. According to Commissioner Bassett: "About one-third of total calorie consumed by Americans come from foods prepared outside the home...knowing how many calories are in the foods you buy has never been more important."

De Blasio supports supervised-injection facilities:

After months of delay, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has released a [report](#) evaluating the feasibility of supervised-injection facilities (SIFs) to combat the growing overdose epidemic. The long-awaited study considers the legal, fiscal, and health-related implications of opening SIFs throughout New York City.

Supervised injection facilities provide a space for substance users to inject drugs under the supervision of medical professionals. These professionals serve to intervene in cases of overdose and to connect users to behavioral health and social services. According to the report, SIFs could save between \$1 and \$7 million each year by diverting overdose costs on the NYC healthcare system. In 2017, the number of drug-related deaths in NYC outnumbered that of car crashes and homicides combined.



At the time of the report's release, Mayor Bill de Blasio expressed support for the opening of four SIFs throughout New York City. These "Overdose Prevention Centers" will be operated by four nonprofits, including: VOCAL-NY in Gowanus, Housing Works in Midtown West, Washington Heights Corner Project in Manhattan, and St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction in Longwood, Bronx. Sites will open after six to 12 months of community planning and hire public safety officers to ensure "quality-of-life" conditions for surrounding neighborhoods.

The Administration is currently seeking approval from State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker, as well as local District Attorneys (DA) and Council Members. As of last week, Council Speaker Corey Johnson, Councilman Stephen Levin, Brooklyn DA Eric Gonzalez, and Manhattan DA Cyrus Vance Jr. have all expressed support.

Congressman introduces bill to support student veterans:

Last week, New York State Congressman Joseph Crowley (NY-14) introduced federal legislation to protect student veterans from housing discrimination. The Students LIVE Act would amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to prohibit discrimination against veterans whose VA educational benefits serve as their primary source of income.

The proposed legislation is part of Representative Crowley's "Better Deal for Queens and the Bronx" – an initiative aimed at improving the lives of working residents in New York's 14th Congressional District. Nearly 90,000 veterans reside in Queens and the Bronx, many of whom struggle to find affordable housing upon return from deployment.

According to Founding Director of the NYC Veterans Alliance Kristen Rouse, many landlords do not accept or understand VA educational benefits as a legitimate source of income. "We need landlords to understand that it is vital to welcome veterans back into our communities and prevent that kind of discrimination across the board," she stated at a recent press conference. The bill has received widespread support from veterans associations, including Student Veterans of America and the Association of the United States Army.



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