



# Healthcare Policy Roundup

June 19, 2018

## Catch the Highlights!

- *U.S. Food and Drug Administration bans food manufacturers from using trans fat*
- *City Council passes \$89.2 billion budget for fiscal year 2019*
- *State paves the way for medical marijuana use in pain management and opioid addiction treatment*

## Questions? Comments?

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## FDA announces nationwide ban on trans fat:

Earlier this week, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a highly-anticipated statement on the ban of artificial trans fat in manufactured goods throughout the country. The ban prohibits restaurants and grocery stores from retailing foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs) often used to extend the shelf life of processed and fast foods. Manufacturers have until 2020 to comply with the new regulation.

Researchers have long documented the relationship between trans fat and cardiovascular disease (CVD). In 2015, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) attributed one in every four American deaths to heart disease. In the previous year, cardiovascular disease accounted for nearly half of New York deaths. According to the FDA, elimination of trans fat in American diets could prevent upwards of 20,000 heart attacks and 7,000 CVD-related deaths throughout the country each year.

The FDA's recent ban follows in the steps of a citywide initiative passed twelve years earlier. In 2006, New York City became the first municipality in the country to restrict the use of trans fat in restaurants. Regarding the FDA's most recent announcement, city Health Commissioner Mary Bassett notes: "We are proud to have been a leader in what is now a nationwide commitment to reducing the public's exposure to unhealthy fats and decreasing the risk of heart attack and stroke."

## City Council passes 2019 fiscal year budget:

After months of negotiation, the New York City Council has passed an \$89.2 billion budget for the 2019 fiscal year. The budget places a strong emphasis on supporting low-income New Yorkers, with Speaker Corey Johnson noting, "The spending plan will strengthen our social safety net and do more for New Yorkers who are struggling to get by on less."

Among the budget's most highly-anticipated items, City Council has allocated \$106 million to the "Fair Fares" program, which will provide half-priced MetroCards to New Yorkers living below the federal poverty line. The budget also includes \$20 million towards the city's Emergency Food Assistance Program and \$213 million towards long and short-term heating systems in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments.

Other notable items include \$150 million towards accessibility services in city schools, \$3 million towards the city's Runaway Homeless Youth Program, \$11.4 million for the city's Crisis Management System, and \$10.3 million to expand the city's Summer Youth Employment Program by 5,000 slots. The budget will be enacted on the first of July.

As part of the Council's Schedule C funding, Community Healthcare Network received nearly \$900,000 in capital and expense dollars. Among a long list of initiatives, we received \$278,000 to support the outfitting of our new East New York Health Center, \$175,000 to support our human trafficking program, \$95,000 for our Military Families Program, and over \$84,600 to support maternal and child health programming. CHN also received funding to support back-to-school fairs in Washington Heights and the South Bronx.

## State paves the way for greater medical marijuana use:

New Yorkers are one step closer to accessing medical marijuana as pain medication. Earlier this week, State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker announced regulations that would allow medical providers to substitute medical marijuana for opioid prescriptions in the treatment of pain. The regulatory amendment would add "prescribed opioid use" as a qualifying condition for the state's medical marijuana program.

The goal of the amendment is to reduce rates of opioid addiction and overdose throughout the state. In a recent statement, Dr. Zucker highlighted research supporting the efficacy of marijuana in reducing the likelihood of opioid abuse among regularly prescribed patients. In 2016, the state Health Department reported over 3,000 deaths related to opioid use. In 2010, the number was just above 1,000.

The state's announcement follows passage of Senate and Assembly legislation proposing the use of medical marijuana in the treatment of opioid addiction. According to the bill's sponsor, Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell (D-Manhattan), medical marijuana could effectively alleviate opioid withdrawal symptoms like nausea and anxiety, while mitigating the risk for prolonged addiction posed by methadone or Vivitrol. The bill is headed to the Governor's desk for approval.

