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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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March 23, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Mayor Zohran Mamdani
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Mamdani:

I write to you again in light of concerning developments occurring under your administration. Recent public reporting about activities within the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (the Department), combined with statements from the City's new health commissioner, Dr. Alister Martin, raise serious questions about the Department's activities and whether they are consistent with the requirements attached to the significant federal funding the agency receives each year.

According to public reporting, employees within the Department recently organized and supported a "Global Oppression and Public Health Working Group," developed "in response to the ongoing genocide in Palestine."¹ The group reportedly held its first meeting during the work day in early February 2026 and it was intended "to address the growing interest among NYC Health Department staff to learn about current and ongoing global oppression in its many forms and how it influences the advancement of health equity."²

During this more than one-hour meeting, there was reportedly no mention of Hamas' October 7, 2023, attacks.³ Instead, discussion focused on the treatment of Palestinians as "second-class citizens" and the Department's goal of "better understand[ing] the impact of global oppression" and "supporting colleagues negatively impacted by global oppression."⁴

Additionally, public statements from Dr. Martin raise further questions about the Department's policy decision-making. In a recent interview, Dr. Martin stated that there is "pretty specific evidence that the federal government is not a fan of the work that we're doing on equity," but

¹ Carl Campanile, *Mamdani NYC health department staffers launch 'Global Oppression Working Group' accusing Israel of genocide*, NEW YORK POST (Feb. 4, 2026, 1:10 PM), <https://nypost.com/2026/02/04/us-news/mamdani-nyc-health-dept-staffers-launch-working-group-accusing-israel-of-genocide/>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

indicated that the Department is “not gonna stop doing that work on equity,” even if the federal government “comes and messes with our money.”⁵

The NYC Health Department is one of the largest public health agencies in the world, with an operating budget of nearly \$2 billion.⁶ The Department employs more than 7,000 individuals and is responsible for providing services to over 8 million people.⁷ Approximately \$600 million (about 20%) of the Department’s budget comes from annual federal funding.⁸

Given the scale of the NYC Health Department and the substantial federal resources granted to it, it is critical to the state of New York that the Department ensure that its activities remain consistent with federal law and the conditions attached to federal funding. Prioritizing a political agenda over compliance with these requirements risks both federal funding and the public health of New York City residents. Federal taxpayers should have confidence that funds intended to support public health services are administered in compliance with those obligations.

These recent developments raise serious questions about whether the agency is taking appropriate steps to ensure that programs and initiatives supported by federal funds are administered in compliance with applicable federal law and directives governing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Agencies receiving federal financial assistance must ensure that programs and workplace environments are managed consistent with federal nondiscrimination requirements, including those established under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in federally assisted programs.⁹

The Department’s focus on the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the creation of an internal “working group” organized around a particular ethnic or national group underscores the need to ensure that workplace initiatives are administered in a manner that does not leave other employees—in this case, Jewish employees—feeling excluded or marginalized. Additionally, the question remains as to whether the Department will hold similar discussions through either this or separate working groups for other ethnic or national groups affected by global geopolitical conflicts, or whether the Department’s sole interest is in denouncing the Israeli Palestinian conflict to the exclusion of all others. These circumstances warrant review of whether the

⁵ Erin Billups, *Mamdani’s new health commissioner says agency will focus on affordability*, SPECTRUM NEWS (Mar. 2, 2026, 9:20 AM), <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2026/03/02/mamdani-s-new-health-commissioner-says-agency-will-focus-on-affordability>.

⁶ N.Y.C. Council, Fin. Div., *Report on the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Plan and the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Capital Commitment Plan for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene – Public Health*, <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2025/05/Department-of-Health-and-Mental-Hygiene-Public-Health-2.pdf>.

⁷ N.Y.C. Dep’t of Health & Mental Hygiene, *About DOH*, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/about-doh.page> (last visited Feb. 19, 2026).

⁸ Eliza Fawcett, *Trump administration slashes public health funding, cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from New York*, HEALTHBEAT (Mar. 27, 2025, 12:34 PM), <https://www.healthbeat.org/newyork/2025/03/26/hhs-trump-cuts-new-york-health-services/>.

⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 2000 (2008).

agency's internal activities are being structured in a manner consistent with federal nondiscrimination requirements.

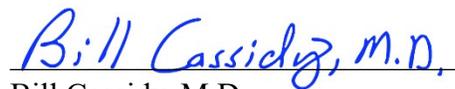
Moreover, statements made by Dr. Martin suggesting that the agency will continue advancing certain equity initiatives despite federal policy changes, warrant careful review of the Department's adherence to federal requirements governing programs supported by federal funds. The federal government has made clear that recipients of federal taxpayer dollars must ensure that these programs are administered consistent with federal law and applicable executive branch directives.

To inform the Committee's investigation of these issues, I ask that you respond to the following questions in writing, on a question-by-question basis, no later than **April 6, 2026**:

1. Please describe the "Global Oppression and Public Health Working Group," including its purpose and scope of activities.
2. Which NYC Health Department senior officials or supervisors were involved, in their official capacity, in organizing, promoting, approving, or participating in the reported working group?
3. Please provide the date, time, and location of all meetings of the working group held to date, including whether such meetings occurred during official work hours.
4. What specific federally funded resources (e.g., staff time, facilities, or digital platforms) were used in connection with the working group and its first meeting?
5. Please provide all materials associated with the working group, including invitations, agendas, presentations, handouts, recordings, and any other documents distributed or discussed during meetings.
6. How does your administration ensure that agencies, particularly those receiving federal funds, comply with federal requirements governing nondiscrimination?
7. Has your administration conducted any review or oversight to determine whether this working group and its meeting complied with federal nondiscrimination requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?
8. Please detail the list of geopolitical conflicts to be discussed at future sessions of the "Global Oppression and Public Health Working Group."
 1. What constitutes as "global oppression"? Please describe the factors considered in deciding the subject matter of the working group.
9. What steps, if any, is your administration taking to reassure New Yorkers that taxpayer dollars remain focused on promoting public health and are not being diverted to push a political agenda that singles out the State of Israel?

10. Please provide any policies, guidance, or training materials governing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the Department.
11. Identify all federal funding streams received by the Department that support employee programs, training, or initiatives related to equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.
12. Please describe any steps the Department has taken since February 2026 to review or evaluate the activities of the working group referenced above, as well as any related diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives conducted by the Department.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Bill Cassidy, M.D. in blue ink.

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions