



City of Detroit
Detroit City Council
Council Member Angela Whitfield Calloway
District 2

MEMORANDUM

TO: Denise Fair Razo, Chief Public Health Office of Detroit Health Department

THRU: Council President, Mary Sheffield

FROM: Council Member Angela Whitfield-Calloway *AWC*

DATE: February 12, 2024

RE: CONCERNING THE RISE IN SYPHILIS CASES

Since the start of this year, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has raised concerns about rising cases of syphilis, a sexually transmitted infection that can affect the health of men, women, and infants. Without treatment, syphilis can spread to the body's nervous system and major organs such as the brain and heart, causing irreparable damage and complications that can easily become life-threatening. Following an infection, the syphilis bacteria can remain in the body for years completely asymptomatic, until it becomes active again.

Early diagnosis and treatment are imperative for this preventable infection, which does not go away on its own.

Beginning in the 1940s, with the increased availability of antibiotics necessary in treating syphilis, infections had decreased monumentally. However, with the current nationwide shortage of antibiotic bicillin impacting the ability to treat infections, the United States has since seen a drastic increase in the number of new syphilis cases. In fact, in 2022, the U.S. surpassed the highest count of the infection since 1950, with a reported 207,000 new cases.

In Michigan, Syphilis rates have risen, on average, 11% annually since 2012. And, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has reported a 25% increase between the years of 2020 and 2021 alone.

In Detroit, we have the highest rate of syphilis cases in the state at 46.4 cases per 100,000 residents.



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I share in the concerns of experts at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sounding this alarm nationwide. There is no plausible reason that the residents of our city should be facing this preventable and treatable infection without the acknowledgment, support, and resources that this impending health crisis demands.

In recognition of these facts, I am formally urging the City of Detroit's Health Department to provide a report on the findings of the rising cases of syphilis in Detroit and to communicate a course of action to address and prevent the rise and spread of syphilis infections throughout the City of Detroit.

Please contact our office if you have any questions or concerns – Breanna Williams,
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