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Local officials, nonprofits push new tactics to increase abortion access

MAYA KAUFMAN   

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 REPRINTS

Plus:

- Memorial Sloan Kettering income bounces to black in 2021
- Flatiron District mental health startup closes \$37 million Series B
- Therapy company establishes HQ and flagship in Flatiron

Lawmakers and nonprofits are moving to expand New York's robust access to abortion services with new efforts to lower financial barriers for women across the state and coming from out of state.

The fiscal 2023 state budget package, which was approved during the w insurance cover abortion without cost sharing. The requirement applies and specifies that abortion not be subject to annual deductibles, coinsur deductible plans.

Previously, insurers were subject to state regulation that they not limit or exclude coverage for abortions that are "medically necessary," which the Department of Financial Services said should be broadly interpreted to include an enrollee's health and well-being.

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The regulation barred cost sharing only for in-network and medically necessary abortions, with the exception that services might be subject to an annual deductible for enrollees on high-deductible plans.

Assemblywoman Jessica González-Rojas of Queens, who sponsored the abortion-coverage bill that was then folded into the budget package, said that still left the question of coverage up to insurers.

"We don't want an insurance bureaucrat determining when and how someone decides to carry their pregnancy to term or not," González-Rojas said.

Advocates said the state still has more work to do to fill gaps in abortion access.

González-Rojas said she and her colleagues are turning their attention to legislation that would establish an abortion access fund, which New Yorkers could choose to pay into by listing a contribution amount on their income-tax return. (Contributions would not reduce the amount of state tax they owe.)

The money would go toward the operational and programmatic expenses, including medical services and logistical costs, of nonprofits that support people in need of abortion services.

As public officials push for greater access to abortion, private nonprofit organizations are doing their part. Tuesday, as Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt signed a bill banning abortions in the Sooner State except in medical emergencies, the New York Society for Ethical Culture, a nonprofit promoting humanist philosophy, said it had to ramp up its outreach efforts.

"There has been a rise of antichoice legislation. That made us realize we had to do something," said Nori Rost, leader of the society, also known as Ethical NYC.

The organization has been planning to launch a program to help people from states where abortion is outlawed to travel to New York and receive services here. Ethical NYC, located on the Upper West Side, intends to use its overnight shelter for the initiative; if there is no room in its eight-bed space, it might offer hotel vouchers.

Ethical NYC now intends to launch its program by June and has earmarked starter funds from its endowment, Rost said. There will be a fundraiser as well, she said, and the society is meeting with stakeholders next Thursday to develop a more comprehensive strategy.

"We're planning for the local Planned Parenthood chapter to provide the needed services, along with interested private doctors," Rost said. Ethical NYC also plans to reach out to City Council member Gale Brewer and the mayor's office for support, along with any other nonprofit that wants to join in.

Beyond New York, Ethical NYC has started the ball rolling with the Ethical Society of Austin, Texas, and will be liaising with similar humanist organizations in affected states, Rost added.

"The law that passed in Texas was an alarming wake-up call for us to spring to action," she said. "The situation has gotten worse since." —Maya Kaufman and Shuan Sim

Memorial Sloan Kettering income bounces to black in 2021

With improved operating revenues in 2021, Memorial Sloan Kettering Ca year following its losses in 2020, according to financial results filed Tues

Total operating revenues for the Upper East Side institution grew 18% to \$6.4 billion last year. Of that amount, revenue from hospital care and services was up 18% to \$5 billion, with revenue from grants, operations-related investments and other income growing as well.

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Key drivers of the revenue rally were increased surgical procedures and clinic visits, as the Covid-19 pandemic improved throughout the year, according to MSK leadership. Grant and contract revenue also improved as clinical trial and research activity returned. Additionally, the institution received stronger philanthropic support, and it continued to receive relief funds from the federal Cares Act.

Memorial Sloan Kettering reported outpatient visits grew 30%, surgical cases were up 12%, admissions grew 5.8% and inpatient days rose 7%.

Total operating expenses for the year were up 6% to \$6.2 billion. Salary expenses grew 4% to \$3.3 billion, and the cost of supplies increased 9% to \$2.1 billion.

The organization saw an operational income gain of \$235 million last year, compared with a loss of \$417 million in 2020. It represented an operating margin of 3.7%, compared to minus 7.7% in 2020.

Memorial Sloan Kettering's nonoperating gains were modest, growing 1% to \$1 billion last year.

Combining operating and nonoperating income, and accounting for changes in pension and post-retirement benefit obligations, the institution recorded a net asset gain of \$1.4 billion last year, 4% higher than in 2020. Total net assets as of Dec. 31 were \$9.8 billion.

Memorial Sloan Kettering, founded in 1884, is one of 52 National Cancer Institute–designated comprehensive cancer centers across the country. –S.S.

Flatiron District mental health startup closes \$37 million Series B

Real has raised \$37 million in Series B funding to scale its membership-based platform for mental health care, it announced Tuesday.

The Flatiron District startup, which provides guided mental health programming and tools for \$13 per month, will invest the proceeds in marketing and plans to nearly double its roughly 50-person team, said CEO and founder Ariela Safira.

Safira said she has no timeline for that hiring, because she wants to keep the onboarding process and workflow sustainable while the startup looks to scale.

"It's really easy to raise a round and then hire insanely," she said.

Owl Ventures, a San Francisco-based venture capital firm that invests in education technology, led the all-equity round with participation from former Cityblock CEO Iyah Romm and chief health officer Dr. Sylvia Romm. Returning investors included [Lightspeed Venture Partners](#), [Female Founders Fund](#), Forerunner Ventures and BBG Ventures.

Real is also backed by celebrities Gwyneth Paltrow, Megan Rapinoe and Eric Kendricks.

The platform has thousands of users across the U.S., and Safira said it has onboarded a few employers over the past year to test how it might offer a business-to-business model. It does not offer health and flexible savings accounts.

In addition to its app, Real also plans to offer therapist-led events at its brick-and-mortar locations.

Real was founded in 2020 and has raised \$53 million to date. –M.K.

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Therapy company establishes HQ and flagship in Flatiron

Resilience Lab, a health-tech company providing mental health services, announced Wednesday that it has opened a flagship practice, which also will serve as its headquarters, in the Flatiron District.

The company offers individual and group therapy, available in person and virtually.

Resilience launched in July 2019, originally offering in-person services only.

"In March 2020, when Covid hit, we shut down all physical locations but one and shifted 100% of our activity online," said Marc Goldberg, co-founder and CEO. The company kept its Bryant Park location.

During the past six months, as pandemic conditions improved, Resilience started considering returning to in-person services, especially as its clinician team in the state grew to 130.

The company started scouting for a new flagship space in the fourth quarter of last year, and it decided on the Flatiron District, where it would build out six therapy spaces totaling 1,750 square feet. Five offices would be for individual therapy and one would be for group therapy.

As the space did not require much work, costs for setting up shop were about \$40,000, Goldberg said. The new place is projected to handle 500 sessions per week.

The offices are meant to support a hybrid model of in-person services and telehealth, where any clinician on its team can use the physical space for sessions as needed, Goldberg said.

"We decided it was important to have a hybrid model," he said, "where 20% of services will be in person and the remaining 80% will be through telehealth."

The flagship model—a large space with multiple offices for hybrid sessions—will serve as a blueprint for Resilience as it plans for expansions into other states in the Northeast, he said. By the end of June, the company expects to have a presence in nine states, from Maine to Pennsylvania, including its three existing ones: New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Steps to grow across the region are underway, with the company in talks with payers to be added into the network, Goldberg said. In New York, Resilience is in network with UnitedHealthcare and Humana, and in-network visits are currently 55% of its patient volume.

Resilience declined to disclose its funds raised to date, but it noted its revenue has grown 10% month over month since its launch. —S.S.

Correction: Resilience's revenue growth was incorrectly stated in a previous version of this article.

AT A GLANCE

MATERNAL MORTALITY: The state Department of Health on Wednesday published the New York State Report of Pregnancy-Associated Deaths in 2018." The report is the work of the New York State Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Advisory Council and the New York State Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Advisory Council. The report details the causes of pregnancy-related death and develop recommendations needed to improve the health and pregnancy-related deaths in 2018, resulting in a rate of 18.2 pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births. Key findings included that 78% of the deaths were preventable, Black women experience higher rates of pregnancy-related causes than White women, and that in 46% of all pregnancy-related deaths, discrimination was identified as a probable or definite circumstance surrounding the death.

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SUBVARIANT ALERT: The state Department of Health on Wednesday issued an alert that two sub-lineages of the Covid-19 omicron BA.2 subvariant, BA.2.12 and BA.2.12.1, had likely been contributing to higher-than-average infections in Central New York. These sub-lineages have been estimated to be up to 27% more infectious than the original BA.2 variant, and account for above 90% of infections in the region. There is no evidence of increased disease severity of these sub-lineages, though the Health Department said it is closely monitoring for any changes.

LYME'S FUNDRAISER: Project Lyme has raised \$1.3 million in its third annual gala, the Upper East Side nonprofit organization announced Wednesday. Proceeds will be used to support awareness and education about tick-borne diseases, research and advocacy for solutions.

MASK MANDATE: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday said the federal mask mandate, which applies to travelers on planes, trains, some buses and in airports, will be extended through May 3. The mandate was originally set to expire April 18. The extension was from the result of the increased spread of the omicron variant, especially the BA.2 subvariant. The CDC also introduced a new Level 4 travel notice, which advises travelers of when they should not travel to a certain destination, regardless of vaccination status, until there is a clearer understanding of the Covid situation at that destination. The new level would become applicable on April 18.

CORRECTION: Sam Rivera was released in 1990. His year of release was incorrect in the previous version of the April 12 Health Pulse article "[Director of overdose prevention centers wants to use love, not aggression, to address adversaries.](#)"

NEWSLETTER UPDATE: The "Who's News" portion of "At a Glance" has transitioned to a paid product available online at [this link](#) and in the Health Pulse newsletter. "Who's News" is a daily update of career transitions in the local health care industry. For more information on submitting a listing, please reach out to Debora Stein at dstein@crain.com.

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