



One question on many minds is what the administration is doing to brace for possible federal cuts because of changes to Medicaid or the Affordable Care Act. | AP Photo/Julie Jacobson

## Risks to primary care clinics on agenda at health budget hearing

By **DAN GOLDBERG** | 02/16/17 05:29 AM EST

State lawmakers are expected to grill members of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration on Thursday about proposed cuts and promised savings in the health sections of the executive budget as payers, providers and advocates explain which sections they hope legislators keep and which of their priorities the governor has overlooked.

The Community Healthcare Association of New York State will tell lawmakers at a joint budget hearing in the state Capitol that primary care clinics are at risk unless the final budget adds \$20 million for indigent care providers, according to testimony provided in advance to POLITICO New York.

“Without these additional dollars, many [federally qualified health centers] may be forced to reduce staff, eliminate expansion plans and, or limit access precisely when it is anticipated the numbers of uninsured may increase statewide, unnecessarily increasing reliance on more costly forms of care,” Lacey Clarke, assistant policy director, is expected to say.

The organization, which represents community health centers, also wants a larger slice of the \$500 million in health care facility transformation money that Cuomo has proposed. That pot has \$30 million designated for community-based providers and Clarke wants to see that grow to \$125 million, 25 percent of the total.

“FQHCs and other community health care providers are the backbone of access to care in many communities because they are heavily relied upon by the uninsured, underinsured, and publicly insured -- the very population that tends to over-utilize hospitals,” she said. “However, this expansion requires access to affordable capital.”

Home care providers would like \$100 million from that same pot dedicated to home and community-based care providers to support health care IT.

The New York State Association of Health Care Providers, which represents home and community-based care providers, is expected to say it is pleased with the more than \$800 million the governor plans to provide members over the next two years. The money helps pay for the increased minimum wage to health care workers who provide services reimbursed by Medicaid.

One question on many minds is what the administration is doing to brace for possible federal cuts because of changes to Medicaid or the Affordable Care Act that have been promised by President Donald Trump and Republican leaders in Congress.

Both the Greater New York Hospital Association and the Healthcare Association of New York State, trade groups that represent hospitals, will explain how important the Affordable Care Act -- and the dollars it provides -- is to their members, even though there isn't much the Legislature can do to help.

“The ongoing push to repeal the Affordable Care Act, with little detail about what may ultimately replace it, puts millions of New Yorkers at risk of losing their health insurance, the state at risk of losing billions of federal health care dollars annually, and hospitals at risk for higher costs, due to a greater number of New Yorkers without health insurance and continued Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rate cuts,” Ken Raske, the president of GNYHA, is expected to say.

Cuomo's spending plan for the coming fiscal year, which begins April 1, does not specifically earmark funds to deal with any federal fallout, although the Medicaid budget, which projects spending over two years, set aside \$245 million in fiscal year 2019 that could be re-purposed if needed.

That's not close to the billions that would be needed every year to maintain the state's 5 percent uninsured rate if the federal government repealed the Affordable Care Act and walked back Medicaid expansion.

"Depending on whether it's repeal and delay or repeal and partial replace, I think the challenges for New York, because we have expanded coverage, are going to be problematic for hospitals," Bea Grause, president of HANYS, told POLITICO New York on Wednesday.

The state's two largest hospital associations would also like the Legislature to remove the cuts to hospitals Cuomo proposed, including a proposal to penalize hospitals for avoidable emergency room visits.

"The penalty component is problematic as it holds hospitals responsible for issues beyond their control and fails to consider that hospitals must medically screen and stabilize patients coming to the ER, even if it is not an emergency," Grause is expected to say, according to her prepared remarks.