

Memo in Support

A.5248 (Gottfried)/ S.3577 (Rivera)

AN ACT to amend the public health law and the state finance law, in relation to enacting the "New York Health Act" and to establishing New York Health

The Community Health Care Association of NYS (CHCANYS) supports Assembly bill A.5248 (Gottfried) and Senate bill S.3577 (Rivera) which would create a single payer health care system in New York State.

CHCANYS is New York's Primary Care Association and, as such, we work closely with the more than 70 federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) that operate approximately 800 sites across the state. FQHCs, also known as community health centers, are non-profit, community run centers located in medically underserved areas that provide high-quality, cost effective primary care, including behavioral and oral health services, to anyone seeking care, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay.

Reliable, affordable, comprehensive insurance coverage for all New Yorkers is essential to ensuring access to primary and preventive care, as well as coverage for chronic conditions. People who are both poor and uninsured are more likely to delay needed medical care for chronic diseases, less likely to fill a prescription, and more likely to be hospitalized for a condition that could have been otherwise avoided with timely health care. Uninsured persons receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at a more advanced stage of illness and, once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care and have a higher mortality rate. Lack of insurance leads to higher rates of emergency room use, especially for conditions that could have been mitigated early or treated more efficiently in a primary care setting.

Coverage is essential to the operational sustainability and long-term viability of providers, especially safety net providers. Gaps in insurance coverage adversely affect safety net providers like FQHCs who serve New York's most vulnerable residents, including those who are uninsured. Although many New Yorkers became newly insured after implementation of the Affordable Care Act, the rate of uninsured patients cared for by FQHCs remains very high—three times the statewide average. While FQHCs receive a small amount of funding through the State's Diagnostic & Treatment Center Safety Net Pool to offset a portion of the cost of providing care to the uninsured, the amount received is not nearly enough to fully reimburse health centers for the cost of services provided. Additionally, when uninsured FQHC patients require specialty care or ancillary services not provided in an FQHC setting, those patients struggle to support those expenses on their own, and many times forego seeking that additional treatment due to their inability to afford that care.

A.5248/S.3577 would bring comprehensive health insurance coverage to all New Yorkers through the creation of a single payer system. Because of this, CHCANYS is pleased to support this legislation.