



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COALITION: HELP IS NEEDED NOW FOR PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND RURAL FACILITIES THAT CARE FOR LOW-INCOME PATIENTS

Community Groups, Elected Leaders, Labor and Health Advocates Call for “Safety Net Hospitals” to Get Adequate Funding

“Enhanced Safety Net Hospital” Bill Must Become Law

More than 15,000 signatures collected across the State Supporting Legislation

NEW YORK: For the first time, legislation that passed both Chambers unanimously (A.9476A/S.69486A) would provide a more targeted definition of our most vulnerable hospitals - those hospitals that truly treat the largest number of uninsured and Medicaid patients.

The Save Our Safety Net Coalition is calling on the Governor to sign the legislation into law.

Our safety net hospitals have never been more needed by patients, especially among communities of color, immigrants and other working families, but our institutions are not getting the funding they so desperately need to meet the changing and growing needs of New Yorkers. Elected leaders, community groups, labor representatives and healthcare workers will gather in front of Harlem Hospital to call for passage of legislation that would ensure New York State’s safety net hospitals receive funding that is critical to providing quality care across the State.

Commission on the Public’s Health System (CPHS)  Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR) SEIU
CWA Local 1180  Doctors Council SEIU  District Council 37 (DC 37)
New York Immigration Coalition  New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA)

More than 15,000 signatures have been collected from hospital employees, community members and health advocates in support of this bill. More than 70 community groups across New York State have written to the Governor.

This law would be an important way to address the injustice funding allocated to our safety net healthcare system. The bill would define an “enhanced safety net” hospital for public and voluntary hospitals based on patient characteristics, providing a level of stability for the State’s critical safety net providers. These hospitals are the backbone of New York State’s health care system. Millions of patients depend on them.

"The funds allocated by the Enhanced Safety Net Hospital bill are absolutely essential to the viability of our safety net system. The future of healthcare in New York State hinges on our public hospitals and in rural hospitals where no other healthcare services are available. There are private hospitals, as well, serving Medicaid and uninsured that are not fairly reimbursed. This bill is critical to creating greater equality in healthcare. It is a must," said NYSNA Secretary Anne Bové, RN and President, NYSNA's H+H/Mayorals Executive Council

"Doctors Council SEIU represents the attending physicians and dentists of the New York City Health + Hospitals. Our frontline doctors and members know that we need to protect and preserve the mission of Health + Hospitals: access to quality care for all regardless of ability to pay," said Frank Proscia, M.D., President, Doctors Council SEIU. "Those hospitals serving significant numbers of uninsured or Medicaid patients are not equitably funded to meet the healthcare needs of our communities. Let’s respect the important role safety net hospitals play serving low-income and immigrant communities across New York State, and let’s get this legislation passed."

"When health care resources and funds are unfairly distributed and policies do not reflect or follow the needs of patients, we should not be surprised that our safety-net is adversely impacted. It is in the best interest of the people for the Governor to sign the Enhanced Safety-net bill," said Anthony Feliciano, Director of the Commission on the Public Health System. "All New Yorkers across the state, especially low-income people, medically underserved communities deserve a strong and healthy safety net system. There is an assumption that all providers want to and can effectively provide care to the uninsured and underserved. This is not true. Some research has shown that patient choice is influenced by the cultural competence of the provider. These are very same institutions that would benefit from this bill and better sustain their open door policies influenced by the cultural competence of the provider. These are very same institutions that would benefit from this bill and better sustain their open door policies."

"Healthcare is the most fundamental human right, regardless of the individual’s ability to pay, and now more than ever it is vital that we work together to protect our most vulnerable neighbors, friends, community members, patients," said Dr. Matthew Chatoor, Regional Vice President for New York for the Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare. "The Enhanced Safety-Net Bill sets out measurable guidelines to determine whether our state’s precious healthcare dollars are best targeted to deliver the greatest support to the state’s most vulnerable working families, children, and immigrants. We urge the Governor to stand up for struggling safety-net hospitals,

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public and private, in communities like Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Buffalo, Rochester, and so many rural communities upstate, and to help physicians keep our patients healthy and strong.”

“As the recent Leapfrog Group high safety ratings for five city hospitals show, our public hospitals, staffed with dedicated public employees, provide quality and safe health care with transparency for New Yorkers regardless of their income, immigration status or whether they have insurance,” said DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido, who union represents 126,000 city workers of which 18,000 are employed by NYC H+H hospitals. “They disproportionately care for the indigent and uninsured of our city while being under-funded by the state. This has to change now. That is why we join this coalition in calling on the governor to sign the ‘Enhanced Safety Net Hospital Bill.’”

“We represent over 1,100 members who work in Administrative roles at NYC Health and Hospital serving the residents of the communities of these Hospitals. Our members not only make sure services are provided to the patients but also use these facilities for themselves and their families. They along with all of staff at these hospitals are vested in providing the best in health care services for all but especially those that are most vulnerable. This cannot be achieved without the proper and equitable funding. Governor Cuomo has a duty to sign this Enhanced Safety –net bill to provide, enhance and protect the health care services these hospital facilities provide for his constituents throughout the state,” said CWA Local 1180 on behalf of its members.

“The Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition representing diverse faith and labor leaders stands in solidarity with our brothers and sisters to urge Governor Cuomo to sign the Enhanced Safety Net Legislation. It is a moral imperative for our Governor to address the great need to provide critical resources to our safety-net hospitals and the communities they serve with compassion. The time is now to act on what is just and fair for those most vulnerable in our midst,” said Executive Director Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Labor Co-Chair Barbara Edmonds, and Faith Co-Chair Father Mark Halliman.

“The New York Immigration Coalition strongly urges Governor Cuomo to sign the "Enhanced Safety Net Hospital" bill into law. The bill supports the sustainability of true safety net providers such as Harlem Hospital. The Health + Hospitals system is a critical resource for New York's immigrant communities, as it is for all city residents. Without a financially secure public hospital system, access to health care for our immigrant communities would be severely curtailed, and many immigrants’ lives and health put at risk. The Senate and Assembly passed the bill unanimously. It is time for Governor Cuomo to add his support,” said Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition.

“Every New Yorker deserves access to healthcare – but for too long, inequitable funding has pushed safety net hospitals to the brink,” New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer said. “As my office noted in our 2015 report, Holes in the Safety Net, the current system shortchanges HHC and other hospitals in our City and across the State that serve as providers of last resort for communities of color, immigrants, and everyday working families. With Washington threatening to roll back coverage, it is more important than ever to ensure that millions of New Yorkers will be able to access the quality care they need and deserve.”

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“New Yorkers throughout our City rely on the services and care that our public hospital system provides,” said Public Advocate Letitia James. “But too many of these hospitals face uncertain futures because they lack adequate funding and feel the threats of expanded privatization. We must ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the healthcare they depend on and the passage of the Enhanced Safety Net Bill will protect and reserve these valuable resources for years to come.”

“My universal refrain for all of New York State is: 'Our Health Is Our Greatest Wealth!' None of us can live without it and that is why I am a vociferous supporter of the Enhanced Safety Net Hospital Bill which will effectively target critical assistance to hospitals that serve the most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers in their time of need,” said State Senator Bill Perkins. “We must continue to work towards putting patients before profits by steadfastly supporting our essential public and voluntary hospitals and the heroic and angelic work they perform.”

“As a labor organizer for the New York State Nurses Association, I know from first hand experience the strenuous demands our hospitals face as they treat our most vulnerable populations,” said New York State Senator Elect Marisol Alcantara. “I urge Governor Cuomo to sign The Enhanced Safety Net Hospital Bill, which will provide our most vulnerable hospitals across the state the adequate level of funding they need to provide care for the uninsured and working families on Medicaid. Healthcare is a human right, and as such we must continuously strive to provide all residents in New York access to excellent healthcare.”

“Safety net hospitals, both non-profit and public, are crucial for health care in underserved communities across New York State. But they don’t get the financial support they need, and much of the state’s aid historically goes to hospitals with greater financial resources. This bill would target additional assistance to the neediest hospitals,” said Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee and Assembly sponsor of A. 9476A.

"Safety net hospitals, which serve some of our most vulnerable populations, are needed now perhaps more than ever. Signing this bill into law will help to ensure that safety net hospitals receive the funding they need to continue providing services to New Yorkers and their families," said Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF-Manhattan).

"As the Council Member that represents the 9th Council District and long-time Harlem resident, I encourage our New York State Legislators and Governor Andrew Cuomo to enact Bill A9476 / S6948 to insure a hospital supplemental reimbursement rate adjustment for enhanced safety net hospitals is established. Harlem Hospital has experienced an influx of new patients that are settling in our community or that travel from afar to receive medical services. Without this legislation and the potential reduction of Disproportionate Share Hospital funding, our medical institutions will be hard pressed to continue to provide quality medical care to the community at large," said Council Member Inez E. Dickens, Manhattan.

“Access to sufficient medical services should not be limited by income levels,” said Council Member Mathieu Eugene, Brooklyn. “The Enhanced Safety Net Bill would alleviate the heavy financial burden that our hospitals face when providing essential health services to the poorest members of the community. As elected officials, it is our duty to provide indigent residents with the healthcare services they require, and that is why it is imperative that this bill is signed into legislation.”

“Hospitals throughout the State are dealing with increased demands but decreased funding and resources. It’s crucial for adequate funding and quality healthcare to be in place to serve millions of New Yorkers in need of service. I urge Gov. Cuomo to sign this legislation into law in order to improve safety net hospitals,” said Council Member Ritchie Torres, Bronx.

“Our safety net hospitals are literally a lifeline for our neighborhoods, and I urge the governor to support them by signing this bill,” said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. “We have a decision to make: will the city that is the economic and cultural heart of our state be a place where only some have ready access to hospitals and modern medical care?”

"It is enormously important that institutions like Harlem Hospital who serve an overwhelming number of low income and uninsured patients receive their fair share of funding. The Enhanced Safety Net bill makes certain that this occurs," said Brian Benjamin, Manhattan Community Board 10 Chair.

"Harlem Hospital in particular plays a vital and valued role in the lives of our clients, both in terms of location and in the culturally-sensitive and linguistically- appropriate way that services are delivered" said Amanda Lugg, Director of Advocacy at African Services Committee--a Harlem-based multiservice agency assisting immigrants, refugees and asylees from across the African Diaspora.