

2014-15 Budget Increases Access to Affordable Health Care, Invests in Long-Term Care and Preserves Medicaid Programs



Posted Mar. 31, 2014 @ 5:56 pm

\$1.2 Billion Capital Program Complements \$8 Billion Federal Medicaid Waiver Program

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Health Committee Chair Assemblyman Richard Gottfried and Aging Committee Chair Joan Millman today announced that the 2014-15 final budget establishes the New York State Basic Health Plan, invests in vital public health programs and health research initiatives and commits support to critical Medicaid programs. It also provides a two percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) for direct care staff in Department of Health programs.

Significantly, the spending plan includes a new \$1.2 billion capital program to complement New York's \$8 billion federal Medicaid program, an initiative that will reinvest savings in the transformation of the state's health care delivery system.

"This is a budget that invests significantly in the health and well-being of all New Yorkers," Speaker Silver said. "It increases access to affordable health insurance, prioritizes much-needed public health programs and commits crucial support to improving the quality and safety of our current health care delivery system at multiple levels. The healthcare initiatives in this budget continue the Assembly Majority's commitment to preserving high-quality health care while at the same time alleviating some of the crushing financial burdens many health care professionals are forced to bear."

"The budget reflects our commitment that health care is a human right and a public responsibility as well as an individual one," Gottfried said. "We're expanding publicly-funded health coverage for low and moderate income working families; supporting non-profit and community-based health care providers; protecting health care workers and patients with the Safe Patient Handling Act; strengthening protections for seniors receiving home care; and funding rape crisis centers, family planning, school health clinics and spinal cord injury research, among other programs. Several issues, such as allowing medical use of marijuana, will continue to be a focus for post-budget legislation."

"This year's budget preserves programs that elderly New Yorkers depend on to enhance their day-to-day activities and improve their overall quality of life," Millman said. "It also works to alleviate some of the financial burden many seniors face by offering continued support to EPIC and Medicaid programs, as well as advocating for truly affordable health care coverage and strong community-based services."

Preserving and Expanding Medicaid Programs

In addition to the significant \$1.2 billion capital program, the final state budget includes several initiatives that preserve and expand important Medicaid services in New York State.

Under the state's Medicaid program, recent changes to the state's pharmacy reimbursement programs for prescription drugs have had a negative financial effect on independent pharmacists. The Assembly successfully fought to ensure that the final budget provides \$41 million to eliminate the use of Average Acquisition Cost for Medicaid Pharmacy reimbursement.



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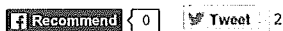
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Page 2 of 3 - This year's final budget also includes:

\$21.5 million for nursing homes to ensure that providers are reimbursed for providing higher levels of medical care;

\$10 million to preserve current protections against spousal impoverishment;

\$1.8 million to support "aid continuing" in Medicaid managed care and managed long-term care to require the continuation of home care or other services while a recipient is pursuing a fair hearing;

\$500,000 to limit Medicaid estate recoveries on individuals aged 55 years and older; and

\$400,000 for "prescriber prevails," so that the decision regarding the medications a patient with psychiatric conditions or other illnesses should receive remains in the hands of the doctor and the patient, not the insurance companies.

In an effort to make health care more affordable for New York State's elderly population, the budget also provides \$4.1 million to expand eligibility for the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program and \$5 million for community services for the elderly.

Investing in Public Health Programs and Research Initiatives

The 2014-15 state budget increases support for several significant public health measures, including an additional \$1.8 million in funding for Rape Crisis Centers, for a total of \$3.6 million. The final budget also provides an additional \$1 million for infertility services and an additional \$750,000 for family planning services.

The Assembly secured an additional \$5 million in support for the Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund, in addition to the \$2 million proposed by Governor Cuomo. This brings the total level of funding for this initiative to \$7 million.

This year's state budget provides \$3.9 million in relief to Early Intervention providers who have unpaid claims for Early Intervention (EI) services provided between April 1, 2013 and June 30, 2013. This will provide financial relief to EI providers that have been waiting almost a year for payment for services already provided. Consequently, this will ensure the EI provider system is not diminished and children with disabilities can continue to receive the vital services on which they rely.

Additionally, the final budget authorizes New York State's organ donor registry to be operated and maintained by a not-for-profit entity with the goal of improving organ donation rates in New York State.

Basic Health Plan Increases Access to Affordable Health Care

Under the authorization of the federal Affordable Care Act, this year's fiscal plan also establishes a Basic Health Program, which will provide health insurance coverage for individuals between 133 percent and 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). A Basic Health Plan will provide access to affordable health insurance for low-income New Yorkers and will also financially benefit the



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Page 3 of 3 - Protecting Health Care Workers

To better protect the health and safety of both patients and health care professionals, safe patient handling is, when deemed appropriate, intended to replace manual lifting and moving tasks with assistive devices to properly and safely transfer patients without injury to the patient or the health care worker.

Recognizing the importance of such measures, this year's budget establishes the Safe Patient Handling Act, an initiative that the Assembly has supported for many years. The Safe Patient Handling Act would require healthcare facilities to establish safe patient handling committees that would design a specific program for safe patient handling. The finalized state budget calls for the implementation of the Act by certain healthcare facilities beginning on January 1, 2017.

"The Safe Patient Handling Act is a smart, much-needed initiative that will help improve the safety and quality of healthcare delivery in our state," Assemblymember Aileen Gunther, sponsor of the Assembly's legislation establishing the program, said. "During an 8-hour shift, a nurse lifts an average of 1.8 tons. This legislation will help address the high cost of injury associated with this profession, including lost days and high Workers' Comp costs, as well as improve patient comfort and care. Its inclusion in the budget is a great achievement for the Assembly and for all the advocates that have fought for many years to get the measure implemented here in New York."

Mario Cilento, President of the New York State AFL-CIO said, "The term 'win-win' is highly overused, but it has never been more appropriate than today; in fact it's a win-win-win. By reducing manual lifting and repositioning of patients, quality of care and outcomes will improve, injuries to health care workers will diminish, and employers will see reduced workers' compensation and lost work day costs. Without the leadership of Speaker Silver, Chairman Gottfried, Assemblywoman Gunther and their Majority colleagues, this would not have been possible; we thank them for making safe patient handling a reality in New York."

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