Universal Health Care for New York Introduced

"New York Health" Single Payer Bill Provides

Comprehensive Coverage Regardless of Income

A plan to provide all New Yorkers with comprehensive health care coverage has been introduced in the State Legislature. "New York Health," a universal health care bill, replaces insurance company coverage, premiums, co-pays, and limited choices of providers. Instead, it would provide publicly-sponsored coverage with a benefit package more comprehensive than most commercial health plans, with full choices of doctors and other providers. The bill, A.5389/S.2078, was introduced by Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard N. Gottfried and Senator Bill Perkins and is co-sponsored by 83 other legislators.

Gottfried and Perkins were joined at the Albany press conference today by Laurie Wen, Executive Director, Physicians for a National Health Program–NY Metro; Dr. Paul Sorum, former Chair of the Capital District chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program; Vito Grasso, Executive Vice President of the New York State Academy of Family Physicians; Lisa Blodgett, New York State Nurses Association; Doug Bullock, First Vice President of the Albany County Central Federation of Labor; Rev. Frances Rosenau, Associate Minister at the Westminster Presbyterian Church; and Mark Dunlea, co-founder of Single Payer New York and Executive Director of the Hunger Action Network of New York State.

New York would be the second state to pass groundbreaking legislation providing for a single-payer health plan. Vermont was the first, in 2011.

"President Obama said, 'No American should ever spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies.' But it shouldn't be just our golden years," said Assembly Member Gottfried.

"Healthcare should be about health, not profit. I applaud Assemblyman Gottfried for recognizing this as the lead sponsor of the single payer bills over the years along with my former colleague Tom Duane, who previously carried this important legislation and recommended that I continue to sponsor it. For some this may be a new issue, but this idea has been around for years and its time has more than come," said Senator Perkins.

No one would have to give up their preferred doctors or other providers. Instead of individuals and employers paying high premiums, deductibles and co-pays, the coverage would be funded through a graduated tax on income, based on ability to pay. New Yorkers would be covered for all medically necessary services including primary, preventive, and specialist care; hospital; mental health; reproductive health; dental; vision; prescription drug; and medical supply costs.

"Health care should be a right, not a privilege. Coverage should be driven by the needs of patients, not insurance companies and stockholders," Assembly Member Gottfried said. "You and your doctor work to keep you healthy. New York Health will pay the bill."

"I have always advocated that your health is your wealth. Affordable health care demands broad bipartisan support. I'm proud to sponsor this important bill and look forward to working with my colleagues and the governor to see it become law," Senator Perkins added.

For most people, New York Health will represent a net income savings compared to the current, regressive system of insurance premiums, deductibles, and co-pays.

Single payer models have dramatically lower administrative costs than private insurance. In 2009, the New York State Department of Health and Insurance Department found that a single-payer system would provide universal coverage at a lower total cost than plans relying on private, employer-based coverage.[1]

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"With single payer, New York manufacturing would be more competitive with the western European countries and Canada that have had universal health care for decades. Single payer would be a big boost for unleashing creativity and entrepreneurship by permitting bright young students to start their own businesses without having to choose work in particular industries simply for health insurance." --Wayne Bayer, Public Employees Federation Executive Board Member and Delegate to the Albany and Troy Labor Councils

"Right now, five New Yorkers die every day due to lack of health care, and many go bankrupt from medical bills. That is unacceptable and inhumane. A universal, publicly financed health care system would save lives AND money. It's a win-win situation for patients, physicians, and our economy." --Laurie Wen, Executive Director, Physicians for a National Health Program – NY Metro

 "High health care bills are one of the main reasons that 3 million New Yorkers have to use emergency food programs annually. Unfortunately, the new Federal health insurance mandate will still leave many New Yorkers without access to affordable, quality care. We need a state single payer health care bill to make sure everyone is covered." --Mark Dunlea, co-founder of Single Payer New York and Executive Director of the Hunger Action Network of New York State

"A single payer system is the only reform that will actually address the enormous cost of redundant administrative requirements by providing one uniform public plan offering the same level of quality care for all New Yorkers. It also includes a collective bargaining component to empower physicians to better advocate for patient safeguards and ensure that there is deference to clinical decision making by physicians." --Vito Grasso, Executive Vice President of the New York State Academy of Family Physicians

"What physicians want, above all, is to provide all our patients regardless of their insurance with the health care we and they think they need. Please, New York State legislators, adopt this bill and allow us to take care of our patients rather than their insurance companies." --Dr. Paul Sorum, former Chair of the Capital District chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program