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Senate Budget Proposal is a Mixed Bag for Health Care Consumers

(New York, NY) [Health Care For All New York](#) (HCFANY), a coalition of more than 160 consumer advocacy organizations, praises the New York State Senate for recognizing the need for out-of-network billing protections and for seriously considering a Basic Health Program in its recent budget proposal, which would improve financial stability and increase coverage for New York families. However, we are surprised and concerned by the Senate's proposal to defund the NY State of Health and the State's health consumer assistance program. This move would jeopardize coverage and critical supports for thousands of New Yorkers. We urge the Senate to keep the health of New Yorkers as a primary goal as budget negotiations continue.

In yesterday's budget resolution, the Senate committed to a continued review of the Governor's Basic Health Program proposal to ensure the financial viability of the program for the State.

"It's tremendously encouraging that the Executive branch and now both legislative houses have taken steps to make a Basic Health Program a reality," said Elisabeth Benjamin, Vice President of Health Initiatives at Community Service Society of New York. "The Basic Health Program will offer affordable, quality coverage to hardworking families just above the poverty level while simultaneously saving the State hundreds of millions of dollars."

Each branch has also proposed desperately needed improvements to insurance provider networks and out-of-network billing protections for New Yorkers, which HCFANY applauds.

"We are extremely encouraged that the Governor, Assembly, and Senate all recognize that surprise medical billings must end to protect the financial stability of New York families," said Mark Scherzer of New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage. "The Senate and Assembly proposals each offer some useful improvements to the strong protections the Governor has proposed for New Yorkers like Gladys Puglla, who received over \$138,000 in bills for out-of-network services she didn't even know she was receiving. We expect the legislature to resolve the narrow differences among these proposals so that this budget finally protects New Yorkers from an out-of-network billing problem we have struggled with for years."



“With important issues like the Basic Health Program and out-of-network protections advancing, consumer advocates are frankly bewildered that the Senate would propose to defund the NY State of Health, one of the most successful health care marketplaces in the country, and the source of affordable health insurance for 600,000 New Yorkers and counting,” said Kate Breslin, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. “On top of defunding the NY State of Health, the Senate’s proposal neglects to funnel \$2.5 million in federal funds to support Community Health Advocates, the statewide consumer assistance program that helps New Yorkers with insurance issues like hospital bills, and has saved over \$12 million for consumers in health care costs since 2010. Why say ‘no’ to programs that provide affordable coverage to New Yorkers, help them use that coverage, and bring significant federal funding to the State?”

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