

March 22, 2023

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Senate Majority Leader  
907 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie  
Speaker of the Assembly  
932 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Majority-Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

Thank you for your past leadership in protecting patients from medical debt, including stopping providers from placing liens on patients' homes or garnishing their wages. We are a group of organizations who have come together in a campaign to End Medical Debt in New York State. Our organizations represent consumers, older people, labor, immigrants, people of color, religious organizations, disability rights groups and other patient organizations. We have joined together to elevate the concerns of patients who face crushing medical debt in our state. We urge you to continue this leadership by including the Ounce of Prevention Act (S1366 (2023)|A8441A (2022)) to modernize the Hospital Financial Assistance Law in the State budget.

While we are proud that our state invests deeply in its health care industry, New Yorkers are still drowning in medical debt and subjected to aggressive collection activities, including thousands of collection lawsuits annually. This is an unacceptable consequence for seeking health care. Moreover, medical debt disproportionately hurts people of color, who are more likely to be uninsured and thus more dependent on safety nets like hospital financial assistance.

The Ounce of Prevention Act would obviate the need for aggressive hospital collection actions and lawsuits by reforming our state's antiquated and flouted Hospital Financial Assistance Law. Research shows the most aggressive hospitals fail to offer meaningful financial assistance to their patients, while drawing down millions from the State Indigent Care Pool.

The Governor's Budget offers an important opening to real reform by calling for a common hospital financial aid application. But we ask you to do more by including these provisions in the final budget deal: increased income eligibility levels; better discounts; longer application time frames; eliminating the asset test on poor people only. All of these components are included in the Ounce of Prevention bill, which passed both Health Committees last year.

We are counting on you to continue the fight to #EndMedicalDebt in New York. Thank you!



Elisabeth Benjamin, Vice President, Health Initiatives  
Community Service Society of New York



Ursula Rozum, Statewide Health Care Organizer  
Citizen Action of New York



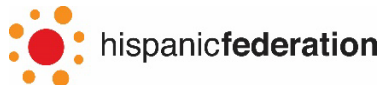
Dr. Hazel Dukes, President  
NAACP NYS Conference



David McNally, Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy  
AARP New York



Jason Cone, Chief Public Policy Officer  
Robin Hood



Bethsy Morales-Reid, Vice President for Program Strategy & Impact  
Hispanic Federation



Blair Horner, Executive Director  
NY Public Interest Research Group



Chuck Bell, Programs Director, Advocacy  
Consumer Reports



Rebecca Antar Novick, Director, Health Law Unit  
The Legal Aid Society



Lara Kassel, Coalition Coordinator  
Medicaid Matters New York



Anthony Feliciano, Vice President Community Mobilization and Advocacy  
Housing Works



Mandy Strenz, Chapter Coordinator  
Physicians for a National Health Program - NY Metro Chapter



Sybil McPherson, Assistant Director of Political and Legislative Action  
District Council 37, AFSCME



Maria Alvarez, Executive Director  
New York StateWide Senior Action Council



Jennifer R. Muthig, Senior Director, Advocacy & Policy  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society



Becca Telzak, Deputy Director  
Make the Road NY



Melissa Genadri, Health & Economic Mobility Policy Associate  
Children's Defense Fund - New York



Rashida Tyler, Deputy Executive Director  
New York State Council of Churches



Rev. E. West McNeill, Executive Director  
Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS



Frederic Riccardi, President  
Medicare Rights Center



Amanda Lugg, Executive Director  
African Services Committee



Lisa Tyson, Director  
Long Island Progressive Coalition



Renata Marinaro, National Director, Health Services  
Entertainment Community Fund

Entertainment  
Community Fund  
Formerly The Actors Fund



Nathaly Rubio-Torio, CEO  
Voces Latinas



Rich Puchalski, Executive Director  
Syracuse United Neighbors



Sean Miller, Northeast Regional Director  
Young Invincibles



Steering Committee  
Health Care for All New York



Christina LeBeau  
Brain Injury Association of NYS



Gus Birkhead, Secretary  
New York State Public Health Association



Kristin Brown, President & CEO  
Empire Justice Center



Lori Andrade, COO  
Health and Welfare Council of Long Island



Dr. Sharon McLennon Wier, Executive Director  
Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York



Sudha Acharya, Executive Director  
South Asian Council for Social Services



Rabbi David Niederman, President  
United Jewish Organization of Williamsburg and North Brooklyn



Lisa Alford, CEO  
ACR Health



Saema Khandakar, Board member  
Muslims For Progress



Therese E. Brzezinski, Director, Planning and Public Policy  
Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc. (LICIL)



Taylor Stimmler, New York #insulin4all Chapter Leader  
New York #insulin4all (T1International)



Mohini Sharma, Organizing Director  
Metro Justice



Sandra Lobo, Executive Director  
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition



Alex Thompson, Director of Advocacy  
New York Association on Independent Living



Juan Carlos Grajeda, Bilingual Program Manager  
Emerald Isle Immigration Center



Mark Hannay, Director  
Metro New York Health Care for All



Sal Curran, Executive Director  
Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc.



Whitney Hu, Director of Civic Engagement & Research  
Churches United for Fair Housing



Helen Krim, Steering Committee  
Northwest Bronx Indivisible



Shoshana Hershkowitz, Founder Suffolk  
Progressives



Judy Fletcher, Health Committee Co-chair  
NYCD16 Indivisible



Kathleen Stein, President  
League of Women Voters of St. Lawrence County, New York



Claire Deroche, Chair  
Public Issues Committee, LI Council of Churches



Social Justice Committee  
UU Congregation at Shelter Rock



Kathryn Szoka, Co-chair  
PEER/NYPAN, Suffolk County



Jeff Mikkelson, Co-Founder  
Hudson Valley Demands New York Health



Celeste Theis  
CCoHope Indivisible



Joe Sackman, Steering Committee Member  
Long Island Activists



Margaret Bradbury, Co-Lead  
Indivisible New Rochelle



Suzanne Burger, Leader  
Westchester Citizen Therapists



Sharon Golden, Jill Horowitz, Administrators  
Together We Will Long Island



Keith Gurgui, Systems Advocate  
Resource Center for Accessible Living