



COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION of New York State

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

A.7230A (Gottfried)/S.6534B (Rivera)

January 28, 2022

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) supports A.7230A/S.6534B which would establish a commission to define, measure, report on and provide recommendations to increase the proportion of the health care dollar allocated to primary care in New York State.

CHCANYS is the primary care association for New York's federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) which serve 2.1 million patients each year. FQHCs offer comprehensive primary, preventive care and wraparound services to everyone, regardless of insurance status, immigration status, or ability to pay. They operate in medically underserved communities at over 800 sites across the State, from the North Country, down to New York City and Long Island, across the Southern Tier and in Niagara Falls. More than 89% of health center patients live below 200% of the federal poverty level, 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP and 13% are uninsured.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, health centers have served as the first line of defense in their communities. Health centers mobilized to implement systems to rapidly expand remote care access, managing patients from home or their clinics and preventing unnecessary emergency room use as hospitals were stretched to unprecedented limits. Health centers have engaged in mass COVID-19 testing and vaccination campaigns of their patients and their communities. Despite these concerted efforts, communities served by community health centers were devastated by COVID-19. COVID-19 highlighted the historical disinvestment low-income Black and Brown communities have experienced, leading to long standing health disparities that made these communities vulnerable to worse outcomes from the pandemic. To change the tides of these inequities, New York State must consciously increase investments in primary care and social support services accordingly.

The pathway to recovery from COVID-19 is through increased investments in primary care. Doing so serves to strengthen the health care system while improving population health outcomes efficiently and effectively. Primary care is a cornerstone of vibrant, thriving communities and keeps families well, children ready to learn, and adults able to pursue education and participate in the workforce. Primary care is often a patient's first point of contact with the health care system, playing a critical role in preventing, identifying, and treating illnesses before they become costly chronic conditions.

Despite the proven impact and effectiveness of primary care, it is estimated that as little as 5-7% of U.S. health care costs are spent in the primary care setting. New York spends higher than the national average per person in health care costs, but consistently ranks below many other states in key health indicators. A.7230A/S.6534B seeks to rebalance New York's health care spending and improve population health.

CHCANYS is pleased to support A.7230A/S.6534B and urges its swift passage in the Assembly and Senate. With questions or follow up, please reach out to Marie Mongeon, Senior Director of Policy: mmongeon@chcanys.org.