

News from the Home Care Association Of New York State



For Immediate Release: May 25, 2010

Contact: Roger L. Noyes (518) 810-0665
(518) 275-6961 cell

Amid Budget Impasse, Senator Valesky and Assemblywoman Destito Introduce Bill to Protect Rural Home Health Services

HCA-developed legislation would block Paterson Administration's circumvention of legislative process in attempt to cut vital funding for county-government-run home health

State Senator David Valesky (D-Oneida) and Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito (D-Rome) have introduced HCA-developed legislation (S.7916/A.11170) that would block \$6.7 million in damaging cuts to local county-government-sponsored home health providers.

The state Department of Health recently proposed a rule to enact cuts to county home care programs administratively, circumventing the legislative process and threatening the survival of home health services in many counties throughout rural and upstate New York.

HCA President Joanne Cunningham said: "County home care providers are already doing the most with the least. They coordinate vital home care in all corners of their region, across mountainous terrain in the Adirondacks and Catskills, on islands in the St. Lawrence River, and across vast geographic stretches of Central and Western New York."

"If enacted, these cuts will leave many counties with no choice but to shutter their home health programs at a time when the evaporation of rural home health services in New York has already reached troubling proportions," Cunningham added. "I applaud Senator Valesky and Assemblywoman Destito for their efforts to protect these cost-effective and highly valued services in the community."

Senator Valesky said: "In many areas of New York State, the county-run home care agency is the only provider of such services in the region. These critical-access providers are in serious peril. Past funding cuts have already left many county-sponsored home care agencies in the red. Any further cuts would wipe out essential services that already save costs by allowing patients to receive care in their own homes rather than in an institutional setting."

Assemblywoman Destito said: "Last year, the Paterson Administration advanced a similar proposal to cut county home health care funding, and I was very pleased that the Legislature rejected that proposal, recognizing how vital these services are to patients throughout upstate New York."

She added: "Yet this year the state Department of Health is now attempting to advance these cuts outside of the legislative process. Our legislation will block this circumvention of the legislative process while protecting safety-

(more)

net home care services that help keep New Yorkers out of the hospital or nursing home and healthy in the community.”

Background on County-run Home Care

County-government-sponsored home health agencies are a vital part of the health delivery system in many rural areas. In fact, **77 percent** of rural home health providers are county-operated, and **44 percent** of all county-run home care agencies are the sole providers of such services in their community. A county-run agency is the sole home care provider in 17 counties. Nine of the recent home care agency closures were public agencies in rural counties.

Given the critical role of county-based home care, the state has in the past made a commitment to support these programs through Article 6 of the public health law. But this year, the Paterson administration – through its budget proposal, and now, through an administrative means – has proposed cutting \$6.7 million in Article 6 funding for county health services.

Loss of this funding may mean the closure of home health agencies that rely on Article 6 funding in order to deliver cost-effective in-home services. These services: provide safe and appropriate care to patients upon discharge from the hospital; enable patients to avoid premature or unwanted nursing-home placement; and reduce hospitalization for chronically ill New Yorkers.

In addition to providing vital care at home to the elderly and disabled, county health agencies are the source of other critical public health services, including: urgent responses to epidemics, such as H1N1; flu and other immunization needs; preventive health screening; maternal and child health care; emergency response in natural disasters; and other services.

Since April 2008, home care providers have been subject to over \$300 million in state budget cuts. A recent analysis by HCA found that even prior to those cuts, 75 percent of county-sponsored home care agencies were operating in the red as of 2007, due to previous cuts, unfunded mandates, and other enormous challenges to the provision of rural home care.

###

The Home Care Association of New York State (HCA), the state's premier home care association, represents more than 400 providers, individuals, and associate members who collectively serve thousands of New Yorkers.