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Home Care Community Honors Senator Craig Johnson with Leadership Award

Senator Johnson is sponsor of key legislation to protect home care services and enhance the delivery of care to patients at home

As a prelude to its State Advocacy Day today in Albany, The Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) has presented State Senator Craig Johnson (D-Port Washington) with an award for “his leadership in working with HCA to advance quality home care in New York State.”

Home care is a vital part of our health system. It allows patients to avoid having to enter a nursing home prematurely. Home care patients are also less likely to require other higher-cost services, such as hospital or emergency care. And when patients do need hospital services, home care helps patients leave the hospital sooner to recuperate at home, where they want to be.

“HCA is privileged to present Senator Johnson with this special award in recognition of his strong support for New York’s home care community and the patients it serves,” said HCA President Joanne Cunningham. “Senator Johnson’s advocacy during budget negotiations has spared the needless loss of home care services, which keep elderly, disabled, and chronically ill New Yorkers safe within the community. We especially applaud Senator Johnson’s collaborative work with the home care community on creative solutions to our state’s fiscal challenges in pursuit of a sensible path for making health care more efficient in New York State.”

Senator Johnson said: “It has been a great pleasure working with HCA and New York’s home care community on positive legislation that will achieve the goals of enhanced access to care and long term health care efficiency. Now more than ever is a time to embrace constructive ideas that protect services for New York’s most vulnerable patients while helping to solve our state’s serious budget challenges. I am indeed honored to receive this distinction from the home care provider community, whose work I so deeply respect.”

Among his many accomplishments on behalf of home care, Senator Johnson has served a leading role in efforts to shield services from further reductions on top of the \$300 million in home care funding cuts already enacted by the State Legislature, just since 2008.

Senator Johnson is the sponsor of a multi-part bill, called the “Home Care Accessibility and Efficiency Improvement Act” (HCA-EIA; S.5179), which includes dozens of constructive, policy-based ideas developed by the home care community to save health care dollars and protect home care from further cuts through program enhancements, workforce flexibility measures, regulatory reforms, performance standards, initiatives to realign

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financial incentives, and other provisions that draw upon home care's already cost-effective design.

Three items from HCA-EIA are included in the 2010-11 proposed Executive State Budget. The Legislature passed a fourth HCA-EIA measure as part of the state deficit-reduction bill in November. That measure, which changes the home care medication pre-fill allowance, will result in an estimated \$20 million in state Medicaid savings this year. Its passage demonstrates how the Legislature and health care community can work together to avoid punishing reimbursement cuts that ultimately jeopardize access to services.

Senator Johnson has also sponsored a bill to support home care strategic capital investment. The legislation is vital for enhancing home care's efforts to further modernize operations and save costs through investments in information technology, electronic medical records, compliance and accountability systems, and other infrastructure enhancements.

These kinds of investments are increasingly important as the complexity of care provided in the home has risen in recent years, and as home care is increasingly looked to as a solution for chronic-care management.

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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.