

News from the Home Care Association Of New York State



For Immediate Release: March 24, 2008

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Home Care Association Speaks out on Congestion Pricing *Seeks Exemption for Traveling Home Health Care Workers*

The Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) today released a letter sent to New York City and State officials requesting that home health care workers be excluded from any congestion pricing system.

“We have reviewed the Mayor’s plan and alternative systems and respectfully request that home care workers be excluded from any final congestion pricing system,” wrote HCA President Joanne Cunningham. “New York City and the State have made a conscious effort to support the use of home and community-based services so that individuals can receive services at home, in the most preferred and appropriate setting. A congestion pricing system that applies to home care workers runs contrary to such efforts.”

HCA sent the letter to Gov. David Paterson, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, and the City Council’s State and Federal Legislative Committee Chair Maria Baez.

“Home care workers are a unique part of the health care system in that the very nature of their work requires transportation – often use of their own vehicle,” said Cunningham. “They provide services vital to the life and care of elderly individuals and young persons with disabilities in their homes.”

Cunningham added that “these services – including nursing; physical, speech and occupational therapy; and home health aide assistance – prevent many people from having to go into hospitals and nursing homes and assist others who are returning to the community from a hospital or nursing home stay.”

A copy of the letter is [attached](#).

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Committed to the principles of high-quality and cost-effective community based health care, the Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) assists its members on state and federal legislation, regulations and reimbursement issues pertinent to the home health field. As the premier home health care association in New York State, HCA represents more than 400 home health care providers, individuals and associate members who collectively provide service and support to thousands of New Yorkers.



March 21, 2008

Honorable Maria Baez
Chair
State and Federal Legislative Committee
New York City Council
250 Broadway, 17th floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilwoman Baez:

On behalf of the Home Care Association of New York State (HCA), representing over 400 health care providers, allied organizations and individuals concerned with the provision of home care in New York State, and approximately 400,000 patients statewide across all payers, I am writing to provide comments on the proposed “congestion pricing system” in Manhattan for the State and Federal Legislative Committee hearings on March 24.

We have reviewed the Mayor’s plan and alternative systems and respectfully request that home care workers be **excluded** from any final congestion pricing system. Home care workers are a unique part of the health care system. They provide services vital to the life and care of elderly individuals and young persons with disabilities in their homes. These services – including nursing; physical, speech and occupational therapy; and home health aide assistance – prevent many people from having to go into hospitals and nursing homes and assist others who are returning to the community from a hospital or nursing home stay.

While many home care workers utilize public transportation, our workers also need to drive for the following reasons:

- They are providing services to more than one client in different parts of Manhattan or are visiting patients in Manhattan and another borough;
- They are purchasing necessities (food, medications) for patients who are homebound.
- They are delivering medical equipment, assistive devices, and supplies or telehealth equipment that necessitate delivery by car;
- Their agencies must use escort transportation to access certain unsafe neighborhoods; and
- They have to drive into Manhattan for staff meetings and then drive to another borough for client visits.

While taxis would be excluded from the Mayor's plan, they are more expensive than utilizing workers' cars, creating financial hardships for workers and their agencies. A taxi service exemption would not address the issue of workers who serve patients over a large area that includes parts of Manhattan.

New York City and the State have made a conscious effort to support the use of home and community-based services so that individuals can receive services at home, in the most preferred and appropriate setting. A congestion pricing system that applies to home care workers runs contrary to such efforts. This system would add new costs to a vital sector of the health care system that is already facing financial hardship due to challenges in recruitment and retention; dependence on inadequate rates from Medicare, Medicaid and private payers; unreimbursed paperwork requirements; and pressures to accept more medically complex patients due to downsizing of the State's hospitals and nursing homes.

Additionally, many home care patients – especially in New York City – are covered by Medicaid. Higher transportation expenses for home care providers will result in increased Medicaid costs.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment and urge the exclusion of home care workers from any congestion pricing system. I am available to discuss this further and can be reached at (518) 810-0664.

Sincerely,



Joanne Cunningham
HCA President

cc: The Honorable Christine Quinn, Speaker, New York City Council
Danielle Barbato, Counsel, New York City Council State and Federal Legislation Committee
The Honorable Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of the City of New York
The Honorable David Paterson, Governor of the State of New York
The Honorable Sheldon Silver, Speaker, New York State Assembly
The Honorable Joseph Bruno, Majority Leader, New York State Senate
The Honorable Malcolm Smith, Minority Leader, New York State Senate
The Honorable James Tedisco, Minority Leader, New York State Assembly
The Honorable Thomas Libous, Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
The Honorable David Gantt, Chair, Assembly Committee on Transportation