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Critical Healthcare Programs Are In Jeopardy, As January 19 Federal Budget Deadline Nears

Consumers, providers and health plans throughout Western NY, Rochester and Finger Lakes Regions urge Congress to put aside partisan bickering and make the health of New Yorkers its highest priority

Healthcare consumers, providers, health plans and workers in Western New York and around the state have grown increasingly anxious about the future since the October 1st Federal budget deadline passed without funding for key healthcare programs. Funding for the **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)** and **Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers (FQHCs)** expired on September 30. New York is projected to burn through its CHIP reserves in two months. October 1 also saw the implementation of **damaging cuts to Medicaid disproportionate share hospital (DSH) funding** to safety net providers and the expiration of funding for rural hospitals. To compound the problem, the Trump Administration ended the Federal government's **cost-sharing reduction payments (CSRs)** under the Affordable Care Act on October 1, endangering the Essential Health Plan, which provides affordable health insurance for 750,000 moderate-income New Yorkers, and creating uncertainty for people in the individual market. In addition to these issues,

pressing Medicare provisions, including therapy caps and outreach funding for low-income Medicare beneficiaries, need immediate bipartisan attention.

The budget deadline has been extended twice and is now this Friday, January 19. Congress must act to fund the government or face a shutdown. New York's healthcare community is united in calling on our Congressional delegation to ensure that any budget or budget extender includes full funding for health insurance for children and moderate-income New Yorkers, meaningful individual market stabilizers and restoration of funding for safety net clinics and hospitals. New York's healthcare consumers, providers, and workers have waited long enough.

- “Our region’s healthcare systems are under assault from these threats, which will weaken access to healthcare for all Western New Yorkers if funding for CHIP and low-volume and Medicare dependent hospitals is not given long-term funding allocation by Congress,” said **Ken Schoetz, President & CEO, Western New York Healthcare Association**. “Our most vulnerable citizens would be forced to hospital emergency rooms for care, at the very time that those hospital emergency rooms, particularly in rural areas, are also under considerable financial pressure. These cuts are real and patient lives will be endangered if Washington chooses to do nothing. Congressional inaction on CHIP, DSH and CSRs — when bi-partisan proposals have been waiting for months to be voted on—demonstrates the sorry state of dysfunction that grips the Capitol these days. Enough is enough.”
- “Hospitals are the economic drivers of our communities. On behalf of the 17 hospitals that we represent across Rochester and the Finger Lakes, we strongly urge Congress to fund the critical programs that our healthcare providers depend on - including funding for hospitals that serve vulnerable populations (Medicaid DSH) and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Congress must pass a budget extender that protects hospitals and ensures that millions of children across upstate New York will have health insurance. Otherwise, these damaging cuts could have a significant impact on our healthcare system and our local economy,” said **Travis Heider, President and CEO, Pandion Healthcare: Education & Advocacy**.
- "We cannot allow vitally important safety net programs that care for tens of thousands of children and families throughout Western New York to be lost in the noise of Washington, D.C.," said **Joanne Haefner, Chief Executive Officer of Neighborhood Health Center**. "To allow the Community Health Centers Fund and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to slip through the cracks and lose funding would have a devastating effect to more than 80,000 of our neighbors, potentially, leaving them without care."
- “If federal funding for community health centers is not reauthorized, we will be forced to decrease services to over 9,000 patients who depend on us as their healthcare partners, and they will have far fewer choices other than the emergency room,” said **Mary Zelazny, CEO of Finger Lakes Community Health**. “The work that we have accomplished with our other healthcare partners to offer comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral health services, allowing patients to seek care in their own communities, will be for naught.”
- **Ivette Tucker, RN, Brooks Hospital, NYSNA member**, “In Western New York, we often feel we're forgotten by our elected representatives. The risks are just too great for our hospital if

Congress doesn't immediately approve New York's essential health plan. Our community and our children are just too important.”

- “Congressional inaction on extending the Children’s Health Insurance Program puts healthcare coverage at risk for hundreds of thousands of kids in New York — this is unacceptable,” said **HANYS President Bea Grause**. “Moreover, the \$350 million in cuts in this year alone to Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital payments and the Medicare Dependent Hospital program the Low-Volume Payment Adjustment—critical federal funding programs for New York's hospitals and health systems serving vulnerable populations—will have real consequences for safety net providers and the patients and communities they serve. We urge Congress to come together in a bipartisan way to ensure these key healthcare programs are not left to deteriorate in the face of broad-based government funding disagreements.”
- “For the past 100 days we have had to mitigate panic not only amongst families we serve but also amid our providers – many who fear for the worst. The uncertainty driven by a lack of decisive congressional action on CHIP and Community Health Center funding is irresponsible and potentially disastrous for the health and wellbeing of our states’ medically underserved children,” said **Dennis Walto, Chief Executive Officer of the Children’s Health Fund**.
- “New York has been a national leader in efforts to expand access to comprehensive, high-quality, affordable coverage. To protect the state’s health reform efforts and to provide certainty to New York’s health care system, it is vital that any funding resolution include meaningful measures that will stabilize the individual insurance market, ensure funding for CSR subsidies, and fully support CHIP. We remain committed to working with our Congressional delegation, along with Governor Cuomo and other state leaders, on measures to protect the advances our state has made to ensure access to coverage and to make health care affordable for New York residents, families, businesses and the state,” said **Eric Linzer, President and CEO of the New York Health Plan Association**.
- “Failing to continue funding for these important programs threatens access to care for over a million New Yorkers, including countless children, who depend upon these programs to have coverage for the care they need” stated **Dr. Charles Rothberg, President of the Medical Society of the State of New York** “There is no credible reason for why funding for these programs should be controversial. We urge Congress and the President to work together to come to an agreement ASAP to assure funding for these essential programs are continued.”
- “It is almost beyond belief that our Congressional leaders have blown past each deadline to provide vitally needed funds for safety net providers and health insurance for children and moderate income families,” said **1199SEIU President George Gresham**. It is their moral responsibility to prevent needless stress and suffering for vulnerable patients, and to date, this responsibility has not been met. We call on Congress do its job to protect public health by fully funding the Children’s Health Insurance Program, Federally Qualified Health Centers and cost-sharing reduction payments, and postponing the damaging Disproportionate Share Hospital Medicaid cuts.”

- "New Yorkers are fed up with congressional inaction on vital health care funding," said **Karen Scharff, Executive Director of Citizen Action of New York**. "Congress must stop using the health and well-being of our children as a political bargaining chip, and act now to protect our children and families by restoring funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Essential Plan, Health Centers and Hospitals."

Signatories:

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East

Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State

Children's Health Fund

Citizen Action of New York

Civil Service Employees Association

Coalition of New York State Public Health Plans

Community Healthcare Association of New York State

Community Service Society of New York

Continuing Care Leadership Coalition

Doctor's Council SEIU

Empire Justice Center

Greater New York Hospital Association

Healthcare Association of New York State

Healthcare for All New York

Health Plan Association of New York State

Medical Society of the State of New York

Medicare Rights Center

New York Association on Independent Living

New York State AFL-CIO

New York State Nurses Association

Nurse Practitioner Association of New York State

New York State Association of Health Care Providers

New York StateWide Senior Action Council

New York State United Teachers

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

United University Professions