



## **HUMAN SERVICES COALITION** OF TOMPKINS COUNTY, INC.

HUMAN SERVICE PLANNING • 2-1-1/INFORMATION & REFERRAL • HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL

### Written Testimony of **Tompkins Health Network**

New York State Joint Legislative Public Hearing on  
2015-16 Executive Health Budget  
**Monday, February 2nd, 2015**  
**10:00 AM**

Chairs:  
Senator Kemp Hannon  
Assemblyman Richard Gottfried

Submitted by:  
Betty Falcão, Director, Tompkins Health Network

I am writing on behalf of the Tompkins Health Network (THN), established in 2004 and part of the not-for-profit Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County. The 25 Board members represent the local community hospital and its network of providers, not-for-profit health and human agencies, local governmental departments, behavioral health providers, advocacy groups and other community-based organizations in Tompkins County, in the Southern Tier Region. Another 60-80 people serve on our committees and task forces, providing input from a broad range of organizations and residents. The THN improves the health of residents through increased access to health care services, collaboration in analyzing and addressing emerging community needs, and enhanced coordination among existing agencies.

This year the Governor's Executive Budget proposes cuts which will **negatively affect the health of rural residents and decrease the economic sustainability of rural health care services**. It would harm two vital rural health programs: the Rural Health Network Development program and the Rural Health Access program. The proposal inappropriately bundles these two uniquely rural health programs with seven otherwise unrelated Health Workforce Development initiatives which are designed to serve all areas of NYS. Secondly, it calls for a 15.1% cut to this bundle. (The 2015-16 proposal is found on the Aid to Localities budget page 490.)

We strongly urge the legislature to oppose this bundling and to restore the Rural Health Network Development program to the current \$6.4 million and the Rural Access program to the current \$9.8 million.

The NYS investment in the Rural Health Networks yields numerous benefits to the residents in rural areas. For example, the Tompkins Health Network has provided Navigation assistance to more than 425 people to obtain insurance through the NYS of Health Marketplace. We have organized coalitions to secure foundation funding to support advance health care planning and asthma management for children, and to bring the evidence-based Diabetes Prevention Program

to our community. Through our falls prevention program for older adults 65+, we have reduced the rate of hospitalizations due to falls by 28% in a time when the rates for the state fell by only 2.4%. We also created a program, in partnership with our United Way to provide urgently-needed prescription assistance to 1,400/yr. uninsured people who receive care at the Ithaca Free clinic and the local Emergency Department.

We are also heavily involved in the local/regional planning and implementation of the NYSDOH initiatives to achieve the Triple Aim of improving patient care, improving the health of populations and reducing the cost of care. We provided data and expertise in the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan for the Prevention Agenda and are helping to address the identified priorities. Within the DSRIP (Delivery System Reform Incentive Payments) program the THN organized key stakeholders to participate in the Project Advisory Committee and Executive Council, to lead several of the project teams, and to take ownership of restructuring Medicaid services. We are active players in the regional PHIP (Population Health Improvement Program) and are working to address health disparities. We helped secure funds for a Care Transitions program to advance the goals of the BIP (Balancing Incentive Payments) program to reduce the rates of 30-day readmission to the hospital

By being the cooperative network of health care providers and community leaders engaged, we help ensure that all appropriate stakeholders are engaged, that rural needs are effectively considered, and that rural resources are efficiently used to achieve improvements in health access and quality. Rural Health Networks are strong rural partners so that the NYSDOH initiatives can have a very broad reach throughout the State.

We respectfully implore you to unbundle Rural Health Network Development and Rural Health Access from Health Workforce Development and restore level funding for these programs. These programs have proven their value over the years in enhancing rural health and wellness across New York.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.



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