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STATEMENT OF Jennifer Bejo, RN, Member of NYSNA

Good morning! My name is Jennifer Bejo. I am a registered nurse working in the Intensive Care Unit at Albany Medical Center Hospital and a proud member of the New York State Nurses Association.

In as much as I want to provide the best care and treatment plan for my patients, I have seen how private insurance companies create challenges and insurmountable barriers for my patients to get that care. Whether it is the high cost, narrow network coverage, inadequate coverage, or no coverage at all, patients are suffering in New York State unnecessarily! I am tired of seeing the failures of our system every day. Here are just a few examples of the nightmares my patients go through.

I recently took care of a patient in the ICU with cerebral palsy. She was admitted after a cardiac arrest due to a seizure. She was intubated, but then failed to be weaned from the ventilator. Her debilitating condition and chronic dependence on the ventilator required her to wait for release from the ICU until the social worker was able to find a facility that will either accept her insurance or would cover her long term care and rehab.

Because of bureaucratic delays from her insurer, she waited over a week before being transferred. As an immuno-compromised patient, she had to continually be put back on rounds of antibiotics as she was exposed unnecessarily to pathogens in the ICU, each day a greater risk to her health. At one point, the transfer was delayed simply because the ambulance company feared they wouldn't be reimbursed for transferring her. She had insurance. There was a facility available.

What is wrong with this picture?

A year ago, a newly admitted female patient went into a cardiac arrest upon arrival in the ICU. Despite our attempt to revive her, our efforts were futile. She had been newly diagnosed with leukemia and had undergone a few rounds of chemo. However, before arriving at our hospital, her therapy was cut short because one of her medicines was no longer covered by her insurance plan. Now it's hard to say exactly what caused her death, but one thing I know --- interruptions in medical care due to unjustified denials of coverage is not good for patient outcomes.

Decisions must be made between the provider and the patient, without interference from an outside bureaucrat concerned about their bottom line.

When we pass the NY Health Act, it will improve access to a comprehensive, affordable and quality health care services for all. It will reduce, if not eradicate, incidents of needless disability or death due to lack of health coverage or delays of care. No one should worry about high premiums, deductibles and copays...or the threat of using up a lifetime worth of savings for long term or home health care. Healthcare will be guaranteed to all because it will prioritize people getting timely treatment and preventative care, before it becomes acute and difficult to manage. It's time that New Yorkers get the quality healthcare they deserve. It's time for the NY Health Act.

Thank you!