



February 8, 2022

Senator Liz Krueger
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
172 State Street, Capitol Building
Room 416 CAP
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein
Chair, Assembly Ways and Means Committee
Legislative Office Building 923
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Chairwoman Krueger and Chairwoman Weinstein,

On behalf of those living with cystic fibrosis (CF) in New York, we urge you to support reinstatement of the Adult Cystic Fibrosis Assistance Program (ACFAP) and its funding in the SFY 2022-2023 budget.

The SFY 2020-2021 budget eliminated the ACFAP's annual appropriation and repealed language authorizing the program from Article 27-G of the Public Health Law. SFY 2021-2022's budget appropriated \$375,000 to the program but did not restore its statutory language. With less than two months remaining in the fiscal year, that appropriation has yet to be disbursed. An appropriation alone is not enough – in order for adults with CF to be able to re-enroll in the program and benefit from its assistance, the SFY 2022-2023 budget must include both funding and language reinstating the ACFAP in statute.

This critical program, which had operated in the State since 1987 prior to its elimination, helped adults with cystic fibrosis afford the high cost of their medical care and insurance premiums, enabling them to maintain their private insurance coverage and access the care and treatments they need to manage the disease. Without the support of the ACFAP, adults with CF are struggling to afford their premiums and care; some are delaying or forgoing care entirely – a decision that could negatively affect their health.

Cystic fibrosis is a rare genetic disease that affects approximately 1,600 people in New York, including 970 adults. CF causes the body to produce thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and digestive system, which can lead to life-threatening infections. Cystic fibrosis is both serious and progressive; lung damage caused by infection can be irreversible and have a lasting impact on length and quality of life.

Cystic fibrosis requires intensive care and treatments, and many people with CF have forgone care due to cost. According to a recent survey of the CF community conducted by George Washington University, over 70 percent of people with CF and their families reported that paying for health care has caused

financial problems such as being contacted by a collection agency, having to file for bankruptcy, experiencing difficulty paying for basic needs like rent and utilities, or having to take a second job to make ends meet. No one insurance type, even commercial plans, adequately protects people from the high cost of CF care so three-quarters of people with CF receive some financial assistance to help pay for their care. Even so, nearly half reported skipping or delaying care because of cost and adults with CF were twice as likely (60 percent) to delay their care as children (30 percent).

The ACFAP helped alleviate the financial burden of cystic fibrosis care by reimbursing patients for CF-related services such as insurance premiums, prescription drugs, inpatient and outpatient care, and vitamins ordered by a medical provider. The ACFAP was not an insurance program. Instead, it defrayed some of the out-of-pocket costs for people with CF enrolled in commercial plans, allowing them to continue to work and keeping them off of public health insurance. To participate, adults with CF had to be at least 21 years old, ineligible for Medicaid, maintain private health insurance, and contribute seven percent of their annual income to the cost of their CF-related medical care and/or insurance premiums. The program served an average of 83 adults with CF between FY 2018 and FY 2020 (the last three fiscal years prior to elimination). Average expenditure over the same period was just shy of \$350,000.

Without the ACFAP, New Yorkers with CF are struggling to afford their premiums and care. As insurance premiums continue to rise, the inability to obtain premium assistance has placed additional financial strain on adults with CF. Unfortunately, we know that some have been forced to delay treatments, medications or other assistive devices after losing access to the ACFAP, including an adult living in New York City who has ceased using their bronchodilator, a medication that helps them breathe. While some families have been able to find temporary private assistance, nothing has been able to fill the gap left by the elimination of this program.

The elimination of this vital program in the midst of the economic and public health crises caused by COVID-19 has made it more difficult for adults to remain on commercial insurance and access the care they need. Please reinstate the ACFAP by adding it back into statute and appropriating roughly \$375,000 per year for this program.

Thank you for keeping in mind the needs of people with CF when forming the SFY 2022-2023 budget. We look forward to working with the state to improve the lives of New Yorkers living with cystic fibrosis.

Sincerely,

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