

**New York State Senate and Assembly Public Hearing on The New York Health Act
Committee on Health**

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Hello and thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the New York Health Act. My name is Zina Huxley-Reicher, and I am a New Yorker, born and raised on the Lower East Side. More recently I am also a 4th year medical student at Mt. Sinai. It is both from my perspective as a medical professional, but also my perspective as a community member and resident of New York state that I share this story.

The first patient that I was assigned to care for during a recent rotation was an individual with Aortic Stenosis, meaning one of the valves in his heart wasn't functioning properly. This is a chronic condition and once it gets to a certain point, a life-saving procedure is necessary to replace the valve. My patient had reached this critical point in his disease and the decision to proceed with the procedure was made. Usually, the next step in this process is that a patient is able to go home and have the procedure done as an outpatient. However, for this individual, that was not the case. He had been hospitalized for 40 days waiting for this procedure. This was not because he was medically complicated or unstable - in fact there was absolutely no medical reason to keep him in the hospital. We were doing nothing to improve his health - only exposing him to unnecessary blood draws, germs, and disrupting his life and that of his family's. My patient was hospitalized for 40 days waiting for this to happen simply because of his insurance status. He is undocumented and so the only way to have emergency medicaid cover this procedure was to remain in the hospital. As a result, there was nothing that could be done other than wait. If we assume that the base cost of a hospitalization per day is about 2800 dollars, that is 112,000 dollars spent by the state on his 40 day stay that had no medical indication. Under the New York Health Act, that decision to hospitalize would not have had to happen, that money could have been spent on other things, and my patient could have spent that time between this diagnosis and procedure at home with his loved ones. This was just one example of many that I have witnessed across NYC where decision making in the healthcare setting was driven not by medical need but by insurance and insurance companies.

For me as a medical student considering the world that I am about to enter as a physician, I hope to be able to practice in a landscape where I can make decisions with my patients that are based on their needs and my medical knowledge and not dictated by the health insurance they have, or don't have. I hope to practice in a world where my time is spent actually caring for patients and not on billing and fighting with insurance companies about whether x medication or y test is medically necessary. The New York Health Act is a landmark piece of legislation that would pave the way toward creating such a system that provides equitable access to quality care for all people. It is for these reasons and so many more that I testify here today in support of the New York Health Act.