

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (NASW-NYC)

New York City Chapter

President, Board of Directors: Mr. Benjamin Sher, LMSW

Executive Director: Dr. Claire Green-Forde, LCSW

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**NEW YORK STATE JOINT ASSEMBLY/SENATE HEARING
ON THE NEW YORK HEALTH ACT**

A.5248/S.3577

October 23, 2019

Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, Senator Gustavo Rivera and
Distinguished Assembly Members and Senators

My name is Benjamin Sher, President of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Social Workers, New York City Chapter, that represents over 6,000 social workers in the New York metropolitan area. Social workers are licensed to provide a variety of social services as well as mental health services in the case of licensed clinical social workers. I appreciate this opportunity to speak about the need for a comprehensive and affordable healthcare system in New York State.

Social workers encounter on a daily basis the problems our clients or patients experience when they become sick and are without insurance or have insufficient insurance coverage:

- Communities of color, already underserved, are suffering worse health outcomes.
- Clients find that the quality of care will depend on which insurance plans they have.
- Clients are forced to interrupt their treatment because their new plan has a different network of providers, or because they now have Medicaid.
- Clients cannot afford their health care bills, even if insured, because they live paycheck to paycheck and cannot afford the deductible or the co-pays.
- Clients remain in abusive relationships because the abuser has the health coverage.
- Clients stay in stressful jobs because they are afraid they may not find adequate coverage if they leave their employer, especially if they have a serious health condition.
- Clients lose their jobs because of hospitalization or a lengthy rehabilitation, and sometimes lose their house or apartment because of unpaid bills.
- Clients already under heavy stress due to financial debts, see the deterioration of their relationship with a partner or spouse, and with their children, resulting in loss of emotional support when they need it most.

To illustrate what I just said, I wish to give a few outrageous examples:

1. The 5 year-old child who was sexually assaulted and had only public insurance thereby receiving treatment in 30-minute sessions, versus having access to 45-minute sessions on other insurance plans.
2. The family whose child has a terminal illness and must make the choice of getting treatment for their baby, losing their job because of missed days while at the hospital, or losing their home and destabilizing their entire family.

millions cannot afford life-saving medications. This “system” also allows insurance companies to increase premiums and deductibles and make decisions on treatment recommended by a provider.

What we need, instead, is to take the profit motive out of healthcare and **adopt a single-payer system as recommended in the New York Health Act, including the ability to negotiate fair prices with pharmaceuticals and medical equipment companies and give back to providers the decision regarding healthcare treatments.** This plan would provide increased funding for **prevention and early intervention** which, as other countries have found out, results in better health outcomes and is indeed economical.

Can we afford it? Two studies have now demonstrated that New York State can pay for such a system and **include long-term care.** Some fear that taxes will increase but we are already paying a tax for Medicare plus very high “health tax” to private companies in the form of premiums, co-pays, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs with **limited services.** These studies have shown that 90% of New York State residents would pay overall less for healthcare, be able to choose their provider, be treated equally whether rich or poor and receive a complete range of services.

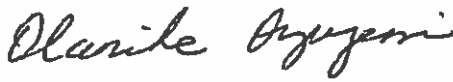
Finally, the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, with thousands of licensed clinical social workers, is the largest provider of mental health services. Hoping that this important Act becomes law, our association stands ready to work side by side with the legislators to ensure that the social work voice and the profession is comprehensively represented in the final product, that it will illustrate the value and worth of the social work profession, and show an understanding of the valuable services within our scope of practice and an adequate reimbursement structure for such services.

Dr. Martin Luther King stated: “Of all the forms of inequity, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhuman”. We agree and believe that the solution is the New York Health Act. We hope that there is now the **political will to approve and implement an affordable, fair, humane and universal system of healthcare for all New York State residents.**

We thank you for your attention.



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