

Agnes McCray, Syracuse

My name is Agnes McCray. I am a community activist and parent who is differently-abled but is extremely capable. Syracuse has been my community and my home where I have happily raised my children, who are now adults, and just because I am a person who is differently abled doesn't mean that I don't have cause or concern of the lack of healthcare thereof for the many citizens, friends, and neighbors that share and live alongside me, so I appreciate having the opportunity to write this letter in regards to the New York Health Act, it's value, and it's importance, which reaches far beyond healthcare.

My disability, or extravagant differences as I refer to it, is a physical one and I am able to get around independently with an electric wheelchair, but the way that the Medicaid system is going forward, I will have to pay for certain specialized durable equipment that has to be added on to my electric wheelchair, such as the tie-down apparatus,

which secures electric wheelchairs to medical transportation vans to prevent them from tipping over or rolling, for the safety of myself and many others when going to a medical appointment. It is also necessary for those who use Call-A-Bus transportation vehicles as well as our Centro line buses as we live our best lives.

As it is now, Medicaid will not be paying for this equipment to be built for electric wheelchairs in the near future, so it's a clear message that the safety of myself and others is not a concern, but what matters is the bottom line. This is a great issue going forward in regards to safety, life, and death, in my opinion. How is that choice to be made when people who are on low income and SSI, have to choose between healthcare and basic needs? There are many types of differently-abled individuals, including those with challenges that are not visible such as people with mental health and diabetes. Healthcare includes the cost of medication, as well as some of the co-pay of a doctor's visit, which may be frequent for the majority of us.

However, under the New York Health Act, the cost of such medical devices and pharmaceutical medication will be decreased by 40%, easing the financial burden on those with extravagant differences and with low income so that they may lead active and prosperous lives.

We can not ask the young people to stay vested and grow in our community as many do not qualify for medical insurance under the current Medicaid system as they seek higher education, part or full time employment. There are also many parents who may or may not be single who've been working at their jobs for years but fall just out of reach for qualification of Medicaid or its services given.

Also, several families within the Syracuse public school system cannot afford the high cost of the flu shot. Therefore, their children can not attend school. There are also many others for whom English is a second language who may need assistance and understanding when it

comes to healthcare and navigating its complicated system.

You shouldn't have to qualify for anything if you are sick. In certain situations, there are even the homeless, who do not qualify for Medicaid in New York State because they need to have an address. Are we in New York State going to be like California, where eradicated diseases are now back because there are so many people in need of healthcare but are uninsured. Take for example, the case of Reverend and CEO of Union Rescue Mission Andy Bales, who lost his leg due to a flesh-eating disease contracted while serving the thousands of homeless persons who are uninsured in Los Angeles' Skid Row? What will happen then? Will we as New Yorkers then have to reintroduce or revisit the Inclusive Healthcare Act?

The New York Health Act is a hot-button issue, and there are hearings happening all across the state. New York State and Syracuse should be the innovators and the

leaders when it comes to bettering the lives of the citizens of our communities, so that we can thrive and succeed, in our businesses, and in the health and education of our children. In this election year in Syracuse, as citizens, advocates, community members, and leaders, we need to send a message to our local elected officials to put the "care" back into healthcare. That is why I believe that the New York Health Act, or something similar, is a win-win situation, . It puts health first, above anything else, and lives matter, because healthcare is a human right.

