



September
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2021

Dear New York Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the hospitals and continuing care facilities that comprise the Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA) and the dedicated caregivers of 1199SEIU United Health Care Workers East, we write to you about the critical need for robust Federal investment in hospital and health care provider infrastructure and support for frontline physicians, nurses, ancillary staff, and home care workers.

GNYHA and 1199SEIU appreciate your role in advancing Congress's fiscal year 2022 budget resolution and accompanying reconciliation instructions that will make a historic investment in the nation's health care system. We strongly support many of the budget resolution's health proposals and respectfully request that Congress include the below provisions, in addition to further investing in health care providers' infrastructure and workforce, in the final reconciliation legislation.

Graduate Medical Education and the Physician Workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted health care workforce issues, including the nation's impending physician shortage and the need to foster a more diverse physician workforce. As our population continues to grow and age, Congress must ensure that a diverse, well-equipped physician workforce can meet the health care needs of patients of all backgrounds. ***We must significantly increase the number of Medicare-supported residency positions and include strategies to increase the supply of historically underrepresented physicians.*** We are grateful that the budget resolution directs the committees of jurisdiction to address health care provider shortages and specifically enhances graduate medical education (GME).

The bipartisan, bicameral *Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2021* would add 14,000 new residency positions eligible for Medicare GME support, prioritize distributing the positions to underserved areas, and commission a report to explore ways to create a more diverse clinical workforce. We strongly support the inclusion of this bill and additional congressional initiatives that seek to expand and train a diverse, culturally competent physician workforce in the reconciliation legislation.

Health Care Workforce and Home- and Community-Based Services

Hospitals, continuing care organizations, and their workers are deeply concerned about reports of adverse mental health outcomes and pandemic-induced burnout among frontline professionals. Persistent health care staff shortages—especially in underserved urban and rural communities where access to care is a constant concern—are severely straining the medical community. Robust health workforce development and job training, including those in both clinical and non-clinical roles, should be included in the reconciliation legislation.

As outlined in President Biden's proposal to invest in the caring economy, we support improving job standards for home care workers and directly supporting professionals through an expansion of home and community-based services (HCBS) under Medicaid. Any Federal expansion of HCBS should include states like New York that have established robust HCBS programs. With strong and growing demand for New York's in-home care market, we must support continuing care organizations that are advancing innovative HCBS and work to improve job conditions for home care professionals who provide essential direct care services to seniors and people with disabilities.

Affordable Care Act (ACA) Expansion, Prescription Drug Pricing, and Health Equity

We support the budget resolution's proposals to significantly expand access to health care coverage by making permanent the enhanced ACA premium subsidies enacted by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and to develop policies that lower prescription drug prices for patients. We appreciate that the budget resolution also directs committees to improve maternal, behavioral, and racial health equity. The glaring, systemic health disparities across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups must be forcefully addressed. We stand ready to support your efforts to bolster the ACA and increase access to vital health services, treatments, and medications.

Capital Funding for Hospital and Health Care Provider Infrastructure

We urge Congress to further invest in hospital and health care provider infrastructure by including capital funding in the final reconciliation legislation. COVID-19 exposed vulnerabilities in New York's hospitals' and health care providers' physical infrastructure and health information technology, especially for safety net hospitals that deliver care to medically underserved populations. While Congress's coronavirus relief bills helped New York's health care providers to avoid financial ruin during the height of the pandemic, they collectively suffered billions in losses and continue to pause capital spending, thereby delaying necessary infrastructure upgrades.

Increasing health care providers' access to Federal capital financing by reinstating and fully funding the Hill-Burton program, forgiving loans for existing debt, promoting access to loans through credit enhancement programs, supporting innovative public-private partnerships, and championing personalized small houses in long-term care would allow providers to modernize facilities and invest in new technologies in preparation for future pandemics.

Thank you for your longtime support of New York hospitals and health care providers and their workforce. We look forward to our continued partnership to strengthen the nation's health care infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Kenneth E. Raske
President
Greater New York Hospital Association



George Gresham
President
1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East