

Response to 2010-2011 Executive Budget

The Nurses Association appreciates the complexity of allocating public funding during such dire financial times. However, the state's fiscal crisis cannot be allowed to result in an unprecedented healthcare crisis in the name of a balanced budget.

MEDICAID / HEALTH

\$1 billion in proposed cuts to health care that include hospitals, nursing homes and home care services cuts have the potential to severely limit access to care and endanger patient safety.

Hospitals/Nursing Homes

Hospitals, nursing homes and public health programs would see a combined reduction of more than \$562 million in payments for services and \$250 million in increased assessment on services delivered.

- Increased assessments on services
 - ***Increasing assessment taxes could prompt facilities to make up for these shortfalls by reducing direct care staff, primarily nurses***
- Proposed reduction in reimbursement rates would tie payments to quality indicators
 - ***Taking money out of the system (i.e. financial penalties) could result in layoffs of nursing staff necessary to achieve quality standards***

Home Care

Home care is a vital component of the state's public health system and one that is relied heavily upon by our most vulnerable population.

- Assessment on services would increase by 1%
 - ***Providers will counteract this shortfall by reducing direct-care staff***
- 12 hour cap per day for fee-for-service payments
 - ***Places the burden of care on New York's citizens, requiring them to seek treatment in alternative settings. Patients and families forced to navigate an overwhelmingly complex healthcare system.***

Public Health Infrastructure

The resilience and efficiency of our public health infrastructure has been tested time and again with response to terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and most recently with the outbreak of the H1N1 virus.

- ***Ensuring capacity of our emergency rooms, hospital beds and acute-care facilities is essential to maintaining the public's welfare in times of crisis.***

NURSING EDUCATION

SUNY/CUNY programs

New York State must address the nursing shortage by supporting an educational system that produces highly qualified and competent RNs.

- Current proposal cuts funding by \$143,100 to programs to expand SUNY nursing education
 - ***The reduction would severely diminish the state university system's ability to meet the needs of the nursing workforce over the next decade***
- \$212 million in operating cuts to SUNY/CUNY education programs
 - ***These cuts would further strain the SUNY/CUNY system, making it difficult to meet the current demand for nurses in New York State.***

TAP (Tuition Assistance Program)

Exercising the 21 Day Amendment rule, the Governor has exempted cuts to TAP awards for students enrolled in nursing programs; amending previous recommendations that TAP Awards be reduced from \$5,000 to \$4,000 for two-year degree programs and eliminated for graduate students.

- ***NYSNA applauds the Governor for exempting TAP awards from budget cuts this fiscal year. Many nursing students rely on TAP to supplement unique expenses associated with their education: purchase of uniforms and transportation to clinical sites.***
- ***Elimination of this award for graduate students would have discouraged an already small pool of nurses who obtain the master's degree necessary to become nursing educators.***

Nursing Faculty Scholarship Programs

A major contributing factor to the nursing shortage is a lack of qualified nursing faculty. A minimum of a master's degree is required to teach most nursing programs.

- ***We appreciate the Governor's proposed renewal of the Senator Patricia McGee Nursing Faculty Scholarship Program through 2015 and the recommendation to fund the program at its current level for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.***
- ***Support of this program signals to the healthcare community that we value our nursing educators and their educational advancement benefits us all.***

OTHER HEALTH BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Nurses Association supports \$650 million in excise taxes on cigarettes and unhealthy beverages.

- ***Proposed taxes will discourage unhealthy habits that strain health spending and promote public health by encouraging New Yorkers to make healthier choices.***

We encourage the legislature to explore ideas proposed by *New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness* and *A Better Choice for New York*:

- ***Stop hiring pricey private consultants costing the state approx. \$200 million per year***
- ***Promote bulk purchase of pharmaceuticals, allow DOH to negotiate directly with drug companies for lower-cost drugs***
- ***Close the Stock Transfer Tax loophole that allows brokers to receive a 100% rebate (cancelling out any revenue gains)***