

Testimony of the New York e-Health Collaborative

Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Joint Legislative Hearing on the 2014-15 Executive Budget - Health and Medicaid February 3, 2014

The New York e-Health Collaborative (NYeC) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Governor Andrew Cuomo's State Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Executive Budget Proposal. The Governor's budget proposal advances health care delivery system redesign to improve outcomes for patients, improve the quality of care delivered, and achieve efficiencies through system integration and collaboration. One of the most significant elements of the Governor's budget proposal is the inclusion of funding for the State Health Information Network of New York (SHIN-NY), which will complete a multi-year initiative to connect electronic health records across the State. NYeC respectfully requests the Legislature to support funding to continue implementation of this critical public good.

OVERVIEW OF THE SHIN-NY

The SHIN-NY (pronounced 'shiny') will be an interconnected, secure statewide network of electronic health records designed to keep all New Yorkers healthier by ensuring that doctors have instant and accessible information about their patients, anywhere and anytime. For instance, the network would allow a doctor operating on an unconscious Emergency Room patient in Buffalo to instantly receive their full medical history including past procedures and relevant allergies from their primary care physician in Brookhaven.

The network will be operated by the New York eHealth Collaborative (NYec), in partnership with the New York State Department of Health. The network will be governed by federal HIPAA and State privacy and security policies and standards.

The SHIN-NY will be a "network of networks," comprised of ten non-profit regional health information organizations (RHIOS) throughout the state that serve their local communities and would be governed by state policy and regulation. These RHIOs have collaborated with Department of Health and the New York eHealth Collaborative to set the vision and roadmap for the policy and technical infrastructure of the SHIN-NY. Currently 70% of the hospitals in New York State are connected to RHIOs.

The SHIN-NY will be the most comprehensive and secure way for providers and patients to access patient records and clinical data. It will provide universal accessibility no matter what health information exchange network a provider is a member of or what EHR system they use. The SHIN-NY should be distinguished from private health information exchange networks, which offer much more limited access and geographic reach. Most significantly, and in contrast to the State's vision for a fully-integrated electronic health information exchange, private network exchanges are not connected to each other and, because they are competitors, have no incentive to interconnect.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Since 2006, New York has been leading the nation in its investments in health information technology and executing on a vision to build a statewide, interoperable health information network. Indeed, over \$940 million dollars has been invested:

- Over \$400 million in State HEAL grants (most expended in the past three years);
- \$100 in Federal funding; and
- \$400 million from insurers, hospitals and other stakeholders

The dollars have been used for the purposes of:

- Helping to support the transition in hospital and practitioners' offices from antiquated, paper-based systems to electronic health records;
- Establishing RHIOs across the State, which allow hospitals and providers to share electronic health records locally; and
- Developing common policies and procedures for sharing of information in a secure fashion through intensive stakeholder involvement and collaboration.

As the system now stands, 92% of hospitals and 40% of providers have electronic health records in place. 70% of hospitals, 60% of FQHCs, 24% of home care providers, and 6% of physician practices are linked to a RHIO. Members of a RHIO can exchange patient health information within their own RHIO, but they cannot yet exchange such information between other RHIOs. The linkages do not exist, and the system is silo-ed.

We are grateful to the Legislature for its past support for HEAL funding that contributed to this initiative. Additional funding is required, however, to complete the work to link these systems together and improve patient safety for all New Yorkers.

THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL

The Governor's 2014-2015 Executive Budget includes \$65 million for the SHIN-NY, a majority of which will go directly to the Regional Health Information Organizations throughout the state. This funding will enable the SHIN-NY to link all the regional networks into a statewide health information exchange. By doing so, the SHIN-NY will increase communication between health care providers and ensure that both providers, payers and patients can access their medical records no matter where they may be. By making it possible to immediately share health information through electronic health records, the SHIN-NY will:

- Ensure that doctors can provide the best quality care by having complete access to a patient's medical history including medication, lab and radiology reports. This can be critical in emergency room situations, for example, if a patient is unconscious or unable to communicate.
- Improve quality care for chronically-ill patients who need several doctors to collaborate in order to address different aspects of their disease or illness.
- Reduce hospital readmission rates and overall State health care costs by ensuring that patients do not receive duplicative or unnecessary care and that every provider has access to a patient's complete medical history to provide the most effective care.
- Create 1,500 health technology jobs across New York State over five years.

It is estimated that annual savings across the State's health care system could exceed \$200 million upon full implementation. Moreover, we anticipate that this investment in the SHIN-NY to make New York the nation's first state to have a publicly interoperable health information network that serves the entire population will create a critical mass for provider participation and, therefore, make the SHIN-NY self-sustaining after a period of three years.

ABOUT NYeC

Founded in 2006 by healthcare leaders, in partnership with the New York State Department of Health, NYeC receives funding from state and federal grants to serve as the focal point for health IT in the State of New York. NYeC works to develop policies and standards, to assist healthcare providers in making the shift to electronic health records, and to coordinate the creation of a network to connect healthcare providers statewide. The goal of NYeC is that no patient, wherever they may need treatment within the State of New York, is ever without fast, secure, accurate, and accessible information.

NYeC, in partnership with the State Health Department, coordinates the operations of the SHIN-NY and works with the RHIOs that belong to that network. NYeC is governed by its Board of Directors, made of up of 20 individuals across different sectors of the healthcare industry, representing the interests of both upstate and downstate New York.

NYeC's work is marked and guided by intensive stakeholder engagement. NYeC's stakeholders include consumers, hospitals, providers, payers, and the State. The policies, procedures and direction in building the SHIN-NY grow out of active stakeholder involvement, including the continued work that would be funded by the Governor's proposed budget appropriation.

CONCLUSION

The State, with the support of the Legislature, has led the nation in creating an infrastructure to serve the public good: ensuring that no matter where in the State you are, your medical history will be available, ensuring that you receive the most appropriate care without delay or missing information. The State has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in setting the foundation for and beginning to build this infrastructure. We are close, but the work is not done. This is a service that must continue to be coordinated by the State and cannot be delegated to proprietary and siloed vendors. We cannot walk away from our investment. We respectfully urge the Legislature to continue its support of the SHIN-NY.