

**Written Testimony of
Chenango Health Network**

**New York State Joint Legislative Public Hearing on
2015-16 Executive Health Budget
Monday, February 2, 2015
10:00 AM**

**Chairs:
Senator Kemp Hannon
Assemblyman Richard Gottfried**

**Submitted by:
Tina Utley Edwards, MPA
Executive Director**

Chenango Health Network (CHN) is a community-based, not-for-profit, rural health network whose mission is to bring together health and human services professionals, business people and consumers to strengthen health care in Chenango County. The Network's board members represent health and human service providers which serve Chenango County and consumers from the community. Member organizations include UHS-Chenango Memorial Hospital; Chenango County Departments of Aging, Public Health, Social Services and Mental Hygiene Services; Hospice and Palliative Care of Chenango County; Bartles Pharmacy; Family Planning of South Central New York; and the Chenango Valley Home.

The Governor's Budget calls for changes that will impact the health of rural New Yorkers.

The NYS Executive Budget 2015-16 cuts funding for the Rural Health Network Development Program (RHNDP) at about 15%. A decrease in funding for a program that has routinely proven its value and which is actively involved in New York State health care reform is not a beneficial approach to achieving the goals of health care reform. Furthermore, the Executive Budget has bundled the RHNDP with unrelated Health Workforce Development Initiatives where it is at risk for being overlooked or cut even further (rural programs are not mentioned in budget briefing documents).

Chenango Health Network opposes the bundling of the Rural Health Network Development Program with Health Workforce Development Initiatives. *We urge the legislature to return the Rural Health Network Development Program to its own budget line and restore the level of funding to its 2014-15 appropriation amount of \$6.4 million.*

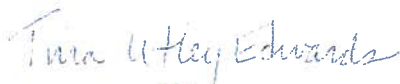
The scope of rural health network efforts extend beyond workforce development. Chenango Health Network is dedicated to improving access to health services; as result, CHN focuses much of its efforts assisting the uninsured, underinsured and medically underserved populations of Chenango County and neighboring communities. CHN maintains five community programs (insurance navigation, community health advocacy/navigation, prescription assistance, cancer outreach and financial assistance for breast cancer patients) which help individuals to access health care. We served 2050 people in 2014; 996 of whom were able obtain health insurance through the NYS Marketplace. We are positioned to serve even more people in 2015 with our expanded insurance navigator presence in Otsego, Delaware and Broome counties.

CHN is also working to ensure that providers and systems are in place so that community residents are able to obtain the necessary and appropriate level of care needed. As with other rural health networks across New York, Chenango Health Network is actively involved with DSRIP. We have been participating in DSRIP planning in our region since it began last year and are providing staff support to several DSRIP projects. In addition, CHN is a partner in the newly established Southern Tier PHIP, our role is to address health disparities, an integral part of population health improvement. Locally, CHN is providing staff support for the Chenango County Heroin Task Force whose goals are to improve access to treatment, address public safety and prevent heroin use and whose goals align with the NYS Prevention Agenda.

Rural health networks have an important and critical role within their own service areas. They are also an essential component of health care reform and restructuring across New York State. Any funding cuts at this time will hamper progress that has been made to improve health outcomes for rural New York.

Again, Chenango Health Network as a part of the New York State Coalition of Rural Health Network urges the legislature to return the Rural Health Network Development Program to its own budget line and be restored to its 2014-15 budget and appropriation amounts of \$6.4 million.

Thank you for considering this request.



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