



Testimony on the 2013-2014 New York State Health/Medicaid Budget
Presented by Dr. Bryan Ludwig
On behalf of the
New York Chiropractic Council
Before the 2013 Joint Legislative Committee on the 2013-2014 NYS Health/Medicaid
Budget
January 30, 2013
Legislative Office Building
Hearing Room B
Albany, New York

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Bryan Ludwig. I am a Doctor of Chiropractic, practicing in Cobleskill, NY, and I also serve as a District President for the New York Chiropractic Council, which is a professional trade association representing Doctors of Chiropractic throughout New York State. The New York Chiropractic Council's mission is to direct people to the realization that healing comes from within and that ultimately the promotion of **health and wellness** is superior to the treatment of disease. Accordingly, the purpose of the New York Chiropractic Council is to promote the basic philosophy, science and art of chiropractic; to protect the welfare of the **practicing Doctor of Chiropractic** without compromise, and with parity and respect; to protect the public's ability to receive chiropractic care without prejudice or financial penalty; and to keep the practice of chiropractic separate and distinct from all other healing professions. On behalf of the New York Chiropractic Council, thank you for allowing me to appear before your important committee today and offer this testimony on the 2013-2014 Health/Medicaid budget.

The good news is that I will be brief and positive in my remarks! First, we wish to thank and commend the Department of Health for including safe, natural and cost-effective chiropractic care as a covered service under the "Essential Health Benefits"/Benchmark Health Plan selected by New York State as it establishes its Health Benefits Exchange, as required under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). Chiropractic looks forward to partnering with you as we continue to reform the delivery of healthcare in New York, by improving access to essential health services while simultaneously reducing healthcare costs. The ACA/Health Benefits Exchange clearly represents a positive step in this direction. We are also pleased that two of our officers, New York Chiropractic Council President Dr. Robert Browne and Vice President Dr. John LaMonica, are presently serving on the Department's Health Benefits Exchange Regional Advisory Committees.

But let's take a step back and briefly examine the overall state of healthcare in New York, and the role chiropractic can play in improving both patient outcomes **and** reducing system costs. Presently, the U.S. spends two and a half times the average of the 34 nations in the OECD on healthcare. We spend more on hospitalization and ambulatory surgery than any other nation. We have more access to drugs and surgery and tests for drugs and surgery, yet the health of the average New Yorker still falls far short of many citizens in other countries – why? Clearly, we have not been getting the value for the healthcare dollars we spend in New York. Chiropractic can help.

There is a growing body of peer-reviewed, scientific evidence that wellness care provided by Doctors of Chiropractic reduces overall healthcare costs, improves health behaviors, and enhances patients' quality-of-life. There is also established evidence that in addition to wellness benefits, there is a clear cost-value benefit to chiropractic care.

In 2000 a study of patients 65 and older who received chiropractic wellness care for at least 5 years had 50% less medical visits, and the need for hospitalization and the costs involved were markedly reduced for those patients receiving chiropractic wellness care. In 1999, a large Chicago HMO began to utilize Doctors of Chiropractic as primary care providers. The DC's focused on assessment and evaluation of risk factors and practiced with a non-pharmaceutical/non-surgical approach. Insurance claims and patient surveys were analyzed to compare clinical outcomes, costs and member satisfaction with a normative control group. During the 4-year study, this integrative medical approach, emphasizing a variety of complementary and alternative medical therapies, resulted in lower patient costs and improved clinical outcomes for patients. Specifically, the patients who went to DC's as their primary care providers had 43% decreases in hospital admissions, 52% reductions in pharmaceutical costs and 43% fewer outpatient surgeries and procedures.

A follow up study from 2003 to 2005 found that during the prior 7 year period and with a larger population, there were even more impressive cost savings. How much? Over seven years of chiropractic-supervised care, there was a decrease of 60.2% in-hospital admissions, 59% less hospital stays, 62% less outpatient surgeries and procedures, and 85% less pharmaceutical costs when compared with conventional medicine IPA performance for the same HMO product in the same geography and within same timeframe.

In North Carolina, a study of 43,000 claims over 19 years showed that when injured workers were seen by a chiropractor instead of other healthcare providers, there was an average cost savings of \$2,900 per worker. The workers also returned to work almost six times faster than those not receiving chiropractic care. An analysis of 10,652 patients with back related injuries in Florida's Workers Compensation system revealed that those under chiropractic care for similar diagnoses had 51.3 % shorter temporary total disability duration, and lower treatment cost than those in the medical care group. Utilizing chiropractic, people were able to get back to work to sooner, and it cost the government far less to do it.

In Canada, the Ontario Ministry of health commissioned a study of the various treatments for low back conditions. They found that low back pain was the most expensive source of worker' compensation costs in North America. They concluded that chiropractic care was safe, more effective than other treatments, and was far more cost effective than traditional medical management. When the Ontario researchers looked again 5 years later they concluded that increasing the usage of chiropractic from 10% to 20% would lead to a clear net savings in direct and indirect healthcare system costs. And there are more and more studies each year attesting to the efficacy and cost-savings of chiropractic care. I would be happy to provide the committee with copies of any of these studies for your further review.

So what is the lesson for New York and how is this relevant as you consider the 2013-14 state budget? Alternative and complementary healthcare providers, such as chiropractic, offer scientifically proven, effective alternatives to conventional medicine and will cost less, as they do not involve lengthy hospital stays, surgeries, or prescription medication. Encouraging patients to seek chiropractic care will save significant healthcare dollars and achieve impressive clinical outcomes, creating a win-win for both patients and the state. As policymakers, you should therefore be aware of and recognize the proven, cost-savings benefits of chiropractic care; support chiropractic as a distinct and valued healing profession; remove any barriers preventing patients from enjoying full access to quality chiropractic care in New York; and help us

fight for reasonable and fair levels of insurance reimbursement for the services we provide, so that chiropractic can flourish in the Empire State and serve as a true partner in achieving real, meaningful healthcare reform.

On behalf of the New York Chiropractic Council, thank you again for the opportunity to offer this testimony today. I wish you the best of luck and the full support of the New York Chiropractic Council as you begin your important work on this year's state budget. Thank you.