



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

Hospital Closure Planning Act

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY September 9, 2009

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SENATOR SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY ANNOUNCES THE PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION THAT ENACTS THE HOSPITAL CLOSURE PLANNING ACT

Legislation requires commissioner of health to hold a hearing within 30 days on the impact a hospital closure would have on its service area

(Albany, NY)- Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) today announced that the New York State Senate has passed legislation (59-0) that enacts the Hospital Closure Planning Act which requires a commissioner of health to hold a hearing within 30 days on the impact a hospital closure would have on the area it serves.

Senator Huntley authored the Hospital Closure Planning Act following the closure of Mary Immaculate Hospital in Jamaica, Queens, and St. John's Queens Hospital in Elmhurst, Queens, both shuttered within a month earlier this year. Both had served in their emergency rooms over 100,000 people in Queens County. Their closings followed that of New Parkway Hospital in Forest Hills, Queens in late 2008. Financial challenges played a part in forcing regulators to order the hospitals closed.

“New Yorkers in need of health care should not have to go without service, suffer unnecessary pain, or worse, lose their life because they were caught off guard by a closed hospital.” said Senator Huntley. “The Hospital Closure Planning Act protects New Yorkers from the loss of health care services in their area by providing stakeholders notice to assess whether to seek new services at a nearby hospital, or participate in efforts to preserve, improve or establish new health care services for the community.”

Senator Huntley said the Hospital Closure Planning Act provides that whenever a general hospital closes, the commissioner of health shall within 30 days of being notified hold a public hearing at a location within the geographic area served by the hospital. The hearing would solicit testimony concerning the extent to which such closure will result in the reduction or elimination of health care services in the affected community, and options and proposals for replacing or enhancing health care services through other means in order to meet the needs of residents in the affected community.

“Persons that would be affected by the impact of a potential hospital closure are entitled to access of a health care facility within reasonable distance,” said Senator Huntley. “The Hospital Closure Planning Act will allow for hearing participants to address access for the surrounding community, recipients of medical assistance for needy persons, the uninsured and underserved populations.”

The Hospital Closure Planning Act requires the commissioner to provide a written report to the governor and the legislature stating the matter, his or her findings on the anticipated impact of a hospital closure.

This legislation (S.5802-A), also passed in the Assembly (A.8461-C/Lancman). The bill is now awaiting action by the Governor, who is expected to sign it into law.