



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

State Senate Adopts Senator Nozzolio Legislation Requiring Inmate Medical Copayments

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO May 14, 2012

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Continuing his fight to protect the taxpayers of New York, State Senator Mike Nozzolio today announced that the Senate has adopted legislation (S.476) he is sponsoring requiring State and county correctional facility inmates to make co-payments for health care visits, the same policy that is in place in the federal prison system and 2/3 of the states.

“Hardworking taxpayers are being forced every day to change or even drop their health care coverage because of rising premiums, unbearable co-pays and outrageous State taxes on healthcare benefits. Meanwhile, those convicted of violent crimes, murder, rape, robbery and drug offenses enjoy unlimited access to free health care at taxpayer expense,” said Senator Nozzolio who serves as Chairman of the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee.

“Recently, we have heard shocking reports that New York State taxpayers are paying for expensive hormone treatments for inmates at Auburn Correctional Facility who are preparing to undergo gender modification,” continued Senator Nozzolio. “Instances like this only continue to illustrate the critical need for this legislation. The time is long overdue for the State

Assembly to act and join my Senate colleagues and I in adopting this measure so that we can see it enacted into law.”

New York taxpayers spend over \$121 million per year to provide top-of-the-line health care to prisoners, amounting to about \$2,000 per inmate. Senator Nozzolio’s legislation requires prisoners to pay \$7.00 per visit as a co-payment for medical treatment. No inmate would be denied medical treatment for an inability to pay, but it would reduce the excessive and non-emergency health care visits currently taking place in our prisons and save millions of taxpayer dollars each year.

The health care benefits provided to our State’s inmates are often expensive and medically unnecessary. Often, inmates will schedule medical appointments when nothing is wrong simply as a way of passing their time behind bars, because it’s free.

In 2000, the federal government successfully adopted and implemented a co-payment system for federal prisoners, saving the Department of Justice millions of dollars every year. More than 2/3 of states have already enacted co-payments for inmate medical services, including California, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Nevada. In states that have instituted a co-pay program, the abuse in the number of sick call visits by inmates was reduced by as much as 76%, also saving these states millions of taxpayer dollars.

“It is simply unacceptable to me that those who have been removed from society for breaking the law enjoy the health care at no charge that so many hardworking taxpayers can no longer afford. Now more than ever, it is vital that we correct this injustice in our corrections system and require prisoners to pay their fair share for health care,” said Senator Nozzolio.

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