



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Health Update and Resource Guide

HUGH T. FARLEY September 14, 2014

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During the 2014 Legislative Session, several bills were enacted to address important health issues. This report summarizes some of these measures, and gives website addresses where you can obtain more information on these topics.

EPIC

The Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Program (EPIC), which I helped create, has assisted many senior citizens over the years with the cost of their prescription drugs. This year,

legislation was enacted to significantly increase the income eligibility thresholds for the EPIC deductible plan. To learn more, visit http://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/epic/ or call 1-800-332-3742.

Surprise medical bills

To protect individuals from being hit with costly “surprise” medical bills from out-of-network physicians, legislation was enacted to:

- improve disclosures so that consumers can determine which providers are out-of-network, know how much they charge, and know how much their insurer will cover
- establish a new dispute resolution process
- assure network adequacy and fair compensation for physicians
- hold consumers harmless in certain cases where there is no in-network provider

CPR instruction

The increased availability of automated external defibrillators (AED) has truly been a lifesaver for many people. In addition, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) continues to be vital in increasing the chances of survival.

It is beneficial to encourage the public to be trained in these skills so that they may provide needed assistance until the EMTs arrive. To encourage the teaching of these skills to high school students as part of their health curriculum, the Legislature passed a bill that, if signed into law, will direct the Education Commissioner to make recommendations for CPR instruction and the use of AEDs in high schools.

Organ donation

Although thousands of New Yorkers are currently on waiting lists for organs, New York State currently has one of the lowest donation rates in the country.

In an effort to help save more lives, legislation was enacted to improve the effectiveness of the State's "Donate Life Registry." It is expected that the State will partner with a nonprofit agency to administer the program, as this model has proven successful in many other states. The law was also expanded to specifically include eye donations.

For more information on the current program, call 1-866-693-6667 or visit <http://www.nyhealth.gov/donatelife> or <http://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/organ-and-tissue-donations>

Women's health website

A new law directs the NYS Health Department to establish a website which makes information more readily available regarding women's health issues and initiatives in New York State. A similar website has been established by the federal government and can be viewed at <http://www.womenshealth.gov/>

Maternal depression

Legislation was enacted to help increase public awareness about maternal depression. This amends and builds on a law I previously sponsored to provide new families with information about post-partum depression. The Health Department and Office of Mental Health will develop updated information for maternal health care providers and new families regarding screening guidelines and options for follow-up support. To view the Department of Health's current fact sheet on this issue, visit

http://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/health_care/perinatal/maternal_factsheet.htm

Eating disorder awareness

The Legislature passed a bill which, if signed into law, would expand efforts to educate the public about eating disorders and the availability of services to address this problem. For more information on current initiatives, visit

http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/chronic/eating_disorders/

Heroin addiction

A package of bills was signed into law to help address the growing and deadly problem of heroin and opioid addiction. These initiatives were developed following a series of statewide forums held by the Senate. These laws will:

- increase the availability and effectiveness of addiction treatment options
- strengthen penalties for drug dealers
- increase educational efforts and public outreach
- increase public awareness of prescription drug take-back options
- expand access to antidotes that can help prevent overdose deaths

For information from the Health Department on the heroin problem, visit:

http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/general/opioid_overdose_prevention/

Medical marijuana

One issue which received a lot of public attention this year was the debate over medical marijuana. In January, the Governor proposed using existing law to conduct a limited research program involving up to 20 hospitals. However, the Legislature focused on a couple of broader proposals.

In the end, a compromise was reached, which I supported, that seeks to make medical marijuana available to those who truly need it, while ensuring tight controls to prevent abuse. Notably, the bill does not allow the smoking of medical marijuana. For a copy of the bill memo and text, visit <http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7923-2013>. To view the Governor's press release announcing the signing of the bill into law, visit <http://www.governor.ny.gov/press/07072014-comprehensive-medical-marijuana-program>