



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Bill to Strengthen Rural Hospitals Passes Senate

PATTY RITCHIE June 16, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced her bipartisan legislation to strengthen rural hospitals and preserve quality care for New Yorkers in rural parts of the state, including in the region she represents, has passed the Senate.

Currently, New York State Medicaid reimbursement rates are capped at lower than operational costs, creating financial stress for rurally located hospitals, also known as Critical Access Hospitals, that need to spread substantial fixed costs over a number of visits and admissions. Under Senator Ritchie's measure (S.6617), Critical Access Hospitals would be paid

on the basis of reasonable cost—the same way Medicare reimburses such hospitals—a change that would help ensure their long-range financial viability.

“Our rural hospitals face a number of challenges that aren’t faced by hospitals in more urban parts of the state,” said Senator Ritchie, who serves as co-chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, a group charged with addressing issues faced by New York’s rural communities, including those related to health care.

“Through this legislation, we can help support hospitals in our region—as well as other similar parts of the state—and ensure that people living in more isolated communities continue to have access to quality health care services.”

Local health care leaders, who see the measure as a way to significantly strengthen rural hospitals, are praising passage of the legislation.

“River Hospital works very hard to meet the unique health care needs of our region,” said River Hospital CEO Ben Moore. “We are grateful to have Senator Ritchie as a partner in our quest to deliver quality health care to people in the North Country and thank her for her advocacy on this measure, which would greatly benefit River Hospital, and other similar hospitals throughout the state.”

“Simply put, our state’s rural hospitals face a very different set of challenges than those in more populated regions of the state,” said Marlinda LaValley, CEO of Gouverneur Hospital. “It’s great to have a representative who understands this, and is willing to take steps to make it easier for us to achieve our goal of providing the best possible care to members of our community. We thank Senator Ritchie for her sponsorship of this legislation, and for her continued support of changes that benefit rural health care.”

The measure was sent to the Assembly, where it is sponsored by Assemblyman Frank Skartados.