



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Bringing Better Healthcare to Underserved Counties

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE May 11, 2018

| ISSUE: **HEALTH EQUITY**



### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Across our state, there are rural communities that struggle to provide access to quality health care, due to the challenge of not attracting doctors, nurses and others in the medical field. Upon graduation, many medical professionals are reluctant to establish themselves in rural areas for several reasons, including large student loan debts and a lower salary than those in urban and suburban settings. In fact, according to the New York State Department of Health, 46 percent of the state's health professional shortage areas fall in rural counties.

In addition to our inability to bring in new doctors and nurses, the average age of practicing physicians we have in the state is now 52 years old. Physicians practicing in rural counties are much more likely to retire than physicians in urban counties are.

In recent years, New York State has been working on several fronts to reverse this dangerous trend, which is having a major impact on our region of Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties.

To help solve this problem, I have sponsored a bill ([S.7377](#)), which would create a New York State Rural Doctors and Nurses Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program. Any doctor or nurse who graduates from an approved New York State College or University and practices in an under represented area would be eligible with the award amount depending on how long the medical professional works in these rural areas.

Meanwhile, New York State has also created a program called Doctors Across New York (DANY). In exchange for three years of service, doctors become eligible for student loan repayment.

The DANY Program includes the Physician Loan Repayment (PLR) and Physician Practice Support (PPS) programs, which also makes funds available for the recruitment of physicians and to encourage them to stay in our underserved areas. The grant awards can be up to \$120,000. These funds can be used by a health care facility to recruit or retain a physician by providing the physician with a signing bonus, which can be used to repay outstanding qualified educational debt, or as enhanced compensation.

The New York State Department of Health (DOH) recently hosted an applicant webinar on the DANY Program. That video can be seen on the DOH website at

[https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/doctors/graduate\\_medical\\_education/doctors\\_across\\_](https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/doctors/graduate_medical_education/doctors_across_)

Those interested in applying for the grant program should begin the process as soon as possible by registering for a Grants Gateway account at the following website:

<https://grantsreform.ny.gov/grantees>. Applications will be accepted beginning May 16.

As Deputy Vice-Chair of the Senate Health Committee, I urge you to share this information to help future medical professionals overcome their debts while simultaneously providing vital services for the health and wellbeing of our rural communities.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2017-S7377**

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- Introduced
  
- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to creating the New York state rural doctors and nurses loan forgiveness program

January 10, 2018

In Senate Committee [Higher Education](#)

Sponsored by [Patty Ritchie](#)

Do you support this bill?