



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Senator Helming Announces Rural Health Initiatives in State Budget

SENATOR PAM HELMING June 12, 2018

| ISSUE: **RURAL HEALTH CARE/DENTAL CARE**

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that she successfully advocated for several rural health initiatives in the recently enacted New York State budget. These include increases in funding for Iroquois Healthcare Association’s “Take a Look” tours, as well as for Rural Health Networks and Critical Access Hospitals, to bring medical care to rural communities.

“The beautiful rural communities that make up the Wayne-Finger Lakes region and New York State often face unique challenges, and one of these challenges is often accessing health care. I am proud to report several measures put forth by the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources are included in this year’s budget. These measures will help address the shortfalls and accessibility challenges that many living in our rural areas face. Our rural communities deserve the same opportunities as their urban counterparts. Health care is a necessity for survival and prosperity, and I will continue to advocate for the necessary resources and programs for our rural communities,” Senator Helming said.

Iroquois Healthcare Association’s “Take a Look” tours provide an opportunity for health care professionals training in New York to consider practicing in upstate communities, specifically rural communities that often suffer from shortages in the medical professions.

On “Take a Look” tours, medical residents, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners embark on three-day tours that expose participants to a specific community in upstate New York to learn what it would be like to live and work there. The “Take a Look” tours have received extremely positive reviews from participants, many of whom are now considering careers in upstate communities as a result of their participation in the program. Funding this year was increased by \$50,000 over last year’s funding, for a total of \$150,000, which will expand the reach of the program.

There are 32 Rural Health Networks (RHNs) throughout New York State that represent partnerships among numerous rural health providers and stakeholders, including hospitals, municipalities, public health agencies, consumers, mental health professionals, and more. Each RHN has a mission that is crafted to the unique needs of its rural community. RHNs work together to identify community health needs, promote wellness, facilitate compliance with statewide healthcare initiatives, and link rural communities to regional and statewide health resources. This year, funding was increased by nearly 15 percent over last year’s level of funding, for a total of \$14.88 million, which will be vital to furthering the impactful work that RHNs do.

Additional funding for Critical Access Hospitals is another significant accomplishment. Critical Access Hospitals provide outpatient, emergency, and inpatient health care services in the most rural areas of the state. While funding to support these hospitals was increased last year, additional funding will be available this year. Critical Access Hospitals and sole community hospitals were included in the definition of enhanced safety net hospitals this year. The budget also included \$25 million for these facilities, which will help support these institutions in providing vital services in our rural communities.