



February 12, 2025

NYS Senate and Assembly Joint Health Budget Subcommittee Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the NYS Senate and Assembly Joint Health Budget hearing process. After listening to the hearing, it became abundantly clear that healthcare workforce issues and shortages continue to plague the healthcare system.

The purpose of this testimony is to make you aware of the advances that are being made in healthcare workforce development throughout New York State as the State legislature and Governor work through this year's budget.

Health WorkForce New York (HWNY) (www.HWNY.org), a 501c3 nonprofit organization, was established in 2014 to convene, support, and leverage existing healthcare workforce stakeholders as well as create, develop, and deploy innovative healthcare workforce solutions. The HWNY Board of Directors is comprised of key leaders in healthcare, education, and community development from around the State.

Since its inception, HWNY has forged hundreds of partnerships throughout New York State to achieve:

- 3,108 trainings delivered
- 216,837 individuals trained
- 284,926 registrations tracked
- 600% increase in job applications (case study)
- 18,230 SMS communications sent
- 747,760 physician resident onboarding hours saved
- 50,500 high school students provided healthcare career exploration
- 250,750 healthcare workers received continuing education, professional development and compliance training

In 2020, HWNY initiated formation of the **Health Workforce Collaborative** (www.HWCollab.org), a nonprofit organization which has since received funding support from more than a dozen community foundations and organizations to design, develop, and deploy a statewide digital platform that serves as a "hub" for students, career-seekers/advancers, employers, training programs, and community-based organizations to share and access information and data, resources, tools, opportunities, and direct engagement with all other community partners. This digital platform is designed to collect, nest, and report on real-time healthcare workforce supply, demand, and development data throughout the State.

Recently, a 14-county regional initiative by HWNY and community partners gave rise to the **Institute for Career Advancement in Medicine** (<http://www.hwcollab.org/institute>). This career-pathways community-driven initiative and digital platform focuses on the core workforce issues of that particular region while also being strategically articulated and leveraged with the Health Workforce Collaborative digital framework. This framework has led to the creation of a Statewide and Regional Development & Deployment of a Healthcare Workforce Infrastructure.

This initiative is both timely and essential, as it addresses the growing healthcare workforce shortage crisis, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The project promises to have a profound and far-reaching impact on improving access to healthcare services, fostering community engagement, and enhancing workforce sustainability across New York State.

As we all know, the healthcare sector is facing a critical shortage of skilled professionals. This issue is most acute in rural and underserved regions, where communities are experiencing significant barriers to care. From clinic closures to long wait times and limited-service availability, these regions suffer disproportionately from workforce shortages. Additionally, the costs associated with hiring traveling healthcare workers are unsustainable and contribute to the instability of the healthcare infrastructure. The result is often a downward spiral in both health outcomes and economic conditions for local communities. Traditional workforce development programs have struggled to keep pace with these challenges, often because they lack the necessary coordination, long-term engagement, and comprehensive community involvement required to make a meaningful difference.

The solution proposed by the *Statewide and Regional Development & Deployment of a Healthcare Workforce Infrastructure* project, stands out because of its innovative, digital-first approach using the Institute for Career Advancement in Medicine platform. The creation of a mobile-accessible digital platform—designed to serve a broad range of stakeholders, including healthcare workers, employers, training programs, and community organizations—has the potential to fundamentally transform how healthcare workforce development is approached. This platform will not only connect key players but also serve as a repository for training resources, job opportunities, and social support services, creating a truly integrated and efficient system.

Equally important is the establishment of regional Institutes, tailored to the unique needs of each area, which will provide localized career pathways and support services. By focusing on building the workforce from within local communities, the project will not only address immediate workforce needs but also help cultivate a sustainable pipeline of talent for the future. The Institute's comprehensive, wrap-around services—including mentorship, career development support, and connections to educational and professional opportunities—ensure that participants are supported at every step of their journey, from education to employment.

The early successes of this project are already evident, particularly with the launch of the first regional deployment in the North Country/Adirondack region. The fact that student and career-seeker enrollment exceeded projections by 70% demonstrates a strong demand for the resources and services this initiative provides. As the project expands to other regions, it promises to have a transformative effect on healthcare workforce development across the state, particularly in areas that need it the most.

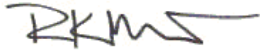
I strongly urge you to support the continued development and deployment of this critical infrastructure. The positive impact of this project cannot be overstated, as it not only addresses the immediate healthcare workforce crisis but also builds a foundation for a more resilient, self-sustaining healthcare

workforce in New York State for years to come. This initiative represents a forward-thinking, community-driven solution to one of the most pressing challenges in healthcare today.

Lastly, the Statewide and Regional Development & Deployment of a Healthcare Workforce Infrastructure project is designed to interface, integrate, articulate, leverage, and promote the 1115 waiver and the current emerging projects funded by the NYSDOH, Office of Health Workforce Innovation.

I am aware that healthcare workforce is a very high priority for New York State. As you consider approaches and strategies to mitigate the State's worsening healthcare workforce crisis, I ask that you please consider engaging with HWNY and our many established partners, innovative workforce solutions, and the successful infrastructure we have already made available.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RKMS', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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