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**SENATOR HOYLMAN, ASSEMBLYMEMBERS EPSTEIN & GOTTFRIED,
ALONG WITH 14 OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS, URGE GOVERNOR TO
FILL VACANCIES ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PLANNING
COUNCIL WITH CONSUMER ADVOCATES FOLLOWING MT. SINAI
BETH ISRAEL CHANGES**

NEW YORK -- Senator Brad Hoylman (D/WF-Manhattan), and Assemblymembers Harvey Epstein (D/WF - Manhattan) and Richard N. Gottfried (D/WF - Manhattan), along with fourteen other city, state and federal elected officials, sent a letter today urging Governor Cuomo to fill two vacancies on the New York State Department of Health's Public Health and Health Planning Council (PHHPC) with consumer advocates to ensure the needs of healthcare consumers are adequately met. This comes in response to the perceived lack of transparency surrounding the changes made and being made in Mount Sinai/Beth Israel Hospital since 2017, which were approved and are pending approval by PHHPC with little input from the community.

Currently none of the twenty-three appointed members on PHHPC, which advises the Commissioner of Health on critical decisions concerning health care facilities and service changes, possess any personal or professional advocacy experience. The consumer advocate seat--vacant now for over a year-- is a vital conduit between the public and PHHPC.

Senator Hoylman said: "The public deserves a voice on the critical decisions that affect their health and well-being, such as the approval to close or diminish services at hospitals, such as the 125-year old Mount Sinai/Beth Israel Hospital in my Senate District. Hospitals, health systems and nursing homes are well represented on the Public Health and Health Planning Council, but the general public is not. Given the enormous power wielded by PHHPC, public accountability and trust demand that the vacant seats on PHHPC be filled consumer advocates as soon as possible."

Assemblymember Epstein said: “Healthcare consumers are the largest subset of individuals directly affected by the Public Health and Health Planning Council's recommendations. We must fill the vacant seats with consumer advocates to ensure that their voices are fairly represented in decisions about New York’s health system. This basic representation will help empower the PHHPC’s mission to preserve and improve public health. The healthcare system is massive, complex, and difficult to navigate, and we have to work to make it more accessible to all New Yorkers.”

Assemblymember Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee, said: “Every decision PHHPC makes matters for the public’s access to care. It should represent not just providers but also the public and health care employees who have a vital stake in these decisions. I am introducing legislation with Senator Hoylman to expand PHHPC’s membership to include additional representation for consumers and healthcare workers.”

A copy of the letter to Governor Cuomo is attached.

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