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Testimony on the 2016-2017 New York State Health/Medicaid Budget

Presented by Dr. Bryan Ludwig

On behalf of the

**New York Chiropractic Council**

Before the 2016 Joint Legislative Committee on the 2016-2017 NYS Health/Medicaid Budget

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I am Dr. Bryan Ludwig, a chiropractor licensed in New York State for 19 years. I have served as the Albany District President for the New York Chiropractic Council. I have testified for the New York Chiropractic Council on the Health budget for the last several years, and in 2014 I testified before the legislative hearing on the potential impact of the proposed NYS Workers' Compensation revised fee schedule.

First let me note the New York Chiropractic Council's appreciation for the Worker's Compensation hearing I just mentioned. Because the legislature held this important hearing, the Workers' Compensation Board decided not to proceed with the implementation of a new fee schedule that, in our opinion, would have been extremely detrimental to both providers and patients in the state Workers' Compensation system. Thank you for that.

Second, thank you for once again via legislative proclamation declaring September 2015 as Chiropractic Health Month in New York. Such recognition is important to the profession as it is representative of the fact that Chiropractic care is an integral part of the overall healthcare system in New York. Thank you.

Third, a quick word about some important pending legislation that will impact health care outcomes in New York, but technically falls within the jurisdiction of the Joint Budget Committee on Higher Education: The Medical Partnership Bill. This important legislation permits Medical Doctors and Doctors of Chiropractic to form business partnerships. By doing so, there will be significant economies of scale, thereby saving the health care system money, and patient outcomes will improve due to enhanced coordination of patient care. Many states, such as New Jersey and Connecticut, already allow for these partnerships, and we ask that you once again consider this legislation as part of the state budget negotiations, as you did last year.

Now let's talk about the role of Chiropractic in New York's health care system. For the past several years, I have had the privilege of being here on behalf of the New York Chiropractic Council and listening to the testimony of many caring and effective health care organizations and professions in New York. Across the board, they were scared that they would not have the necessary funding to properly care for their patients and clients. I could not help but think how their own bottom lines, and our own state budget, **would benefit if there were simply fewer sick New Yorkers!** The common themes I heard repeatedly were if only we had more funding we could hire more help, have more beds, create more infomercials of quitting smoking, and provide more drugs for our sick patients.

Another common theme: over the years, I have listened to Senators and Assembly members express their concerns about an increasing number of New Yorkers becoming addicted to narcotics, particularly heroin. And just last week I listened to a local news story about the common practice of prescribing antibiotics for viral diseases. The story highlighted the side effect of this useless practice, as bacterial diseases become resistant to antibiotics. More wasted time and money.

From the Chiropractic perspective, the real problem is what is often promoted and accepted as “health”, truly is not. The quick fix mentality of treating symptoms alone without finding the underlying cause of disease leads to chronic illness and wasteful spending on health care in New York. But Chiropractic can help New Yorkers achieve true health, safely and naturally, and in the process save our health care system significant amounts of money.

If you want to spend less on prescription drugs and needless surgery, if your goal is to have fewer heroin addicts among young New Yorkers, then you must reach the person BEFORE they become an addict, sick or diseased – you must put and keep them on the road to good health. You must try to heal the body naturally. Does the patient have the proper building blocks (nutrition)? Does he or she exercise? Is their mind and emotional state healthy? Are the brain and body communicating effectively via the central nervous system? These are the essential, holistic questions that Chiropractic asks.

Chiropractic focuses on how the body works as a whole, without drugs or surgery. Chiropractic does not pollute or modify the body chemically, merely to mask symptoms and disease, but actually helps the body return to its proper function. Chiropractic achieves excellent outcomes for people with health problems, but more important, Chiropractic shines at keeping people healthy, so disease or symptom manifestation never occurs! Chiropractic helps keep people healthy before chronic disease or addiction robs the body of its natural ability to heal itself. It’s as simple as that.

A case in point: Medicaid. Chiropractic care could substantially help many Medicaid eligible New Yorkers, but it is essentially not presently a covered Medicaid benefit. So Medicaid patients seeking Chiropractic care must pay 100% out-of-pocket for preventative chiropractic care. Why?

We need a better way, and Chiropractic can be part of that solution. By keeping New Yorkers healthy in the first place, Chiropractic can help New York’s health care system save money.

On behalf of the New York Chiropractic Council, thank you again for the opportunity to offer this testimony today. I wish you the best of luck and the full support of the New York Chiropractic Council as you begin your important work on this year’s state budget. Thank you.