

Dear Legislators,

I am a member of Medicaid Matters New York.

I am a retired neurologist. I was a group neurologist at one of the dedicated group practices of the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York, a.k.a., HIP (now part of EmblemHealth). In 13 years, I cared for 30,000 enrollees of HIP's Medicaid Managed Care Plan. I saw how complex well-run managed care plans are and how it takes years and decades to set up effective provider networks that serve patients' needs.

I strongly oppose the Governor's proposed re-procurement of Medicaid Managed Care Plans. The Governor wants all current MMCPs to re-apply to remain in the state, saying the DOH will choose not fewer than 2 and no more than 5 plans for each county. This is a terrible idea because it will wreak havoc on continuity of care. Thousands of providers will have to re-credential with new plans, a process that even under the best of circumstances takes many months. With thousands being re-credentialed at once, the entire process will take years. During this time, patients will be unable to access their own providers, massively disrupting medical management of chronic conditions and driving countless thousands of patients into crisis, flooding emergency rooms.

I fail to see the motivation behind the Governor's proposal. What is to be gained? Any assumed savings will be swamped by the increased expense of depriving patients of timely medical care. The big winners will be the huge for-profit national managed care plans, resulting in more privatization and less of a voice of the Medicaid population in how their healthcare is administered. This reeks of a tone-deaf budget department scheme in the corrupt tradition of former Gov Cuomo.

New York has many thousands of dedicated providers who work very hard to serve 6 million Medicaid patients. The system may be flawed, and the Governor should address any issues in an incremental manner. The last thing Medicaid patients need is to have their entire healthcare system abruptly unrooted and thrown to an auction for the highest bidder to capture. Providers will be hurt, patients will be hurt, people will die, and costs can only go up. New York needs less monopolistic privatization, not more.

I ask the Legislature to remove the re-procurement scheme from the State budget. Tell the budgeteers never to forget human suffering.

Yours,

James Edmondson, M.D., Ph.D.

Forest Hills, NY