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Budget Testimony for the Labor/Workforce Development Budget Hearing

Health Workforce New York (HWNY) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization focused on strengthening the healthcare workforce across New York State. Its primary purpose is to help address critical challenges in recruiting, training, and retaining healthcare workers — especially in underserved rural and urban communities.

Staffing gaps have forced departments and, in some cases, entire facilities to close, driving up costs, lengthening waiting times, and reducing access to care. To address this important and on-going problem HWNY created the **Institute for Career Advancement in Medicine (ICAM)**, in partnership with the Health Workforce Collaborative (HWC) and the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC).

By bringing together employers, educators, workforce organizations, economic development agencies and other community organizations, ICAM creates a vital integrated healthcare career infrastructure that facilitates coordination of all healthcare workforce programs, tracks engagement and retention outcomes, and provides real-time data for evaluation and forecasting.

ICAM is also designed to directly align, articulate, and leverage with statewide priorities, including but not limited to the 1115 Waiver Workforce Initiatives, the Office of Health Workforce Innovation, AHEC programming, and the SUNY HealthCARES initiative. For example, ICAM serves as the digital and operational framework supporting three NYS Department of Health, *Health Equity and Learning Program* (HELP) initiatives, ensuring consistent mentorship, engagement, and data tracking across participating regions, and providing a proven model that can be scaled to others statewide.

Each regional deployment is grounded in community collaboration. ICAM engages local, boots-on-the-ground organizations to lead outreach, engagement, and recruitment efforts, ensuring that strategies reflect the voices and needs of the populations served. A dedicated digital development team designs and co-creates regional portals in partnership with local stakeholders and community experts, integrating their insights into every phase of development. Robust evaluation by the Center for Health Workforce Studies, a key partner in the project, tracks impact and outcomes in real time, allowing for continuous optimization and data-driven decision-making across all regions.

Pilot Deployment Outcomes

The pilot deployments of ICAM in the North Country/Adirondacks and Central New York regions have demonstrated the framework's scalability, adaptability, and measurable impact.

North Country/Adirondack Region – The Initial Pilot Project

- Since 2023, funding support from the region has included the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, The Community Foundation, the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, the northern New York Community Foundation, the Gorman Foundation, the Cloudsplitter Foundation, Clinton County, the United Way of Northern New York, the Northern New York Area Health Area Health Education Center, the Center for Health Workforce Studies, and the Hudson Mohawk Area Health Education Center. There was also an additional \$400,000 in community-in-kind contributions.
- Developed and co-designed using client-centered principles through strong regional partnerships among educators, healthcare employers, community developers, and AHECs.
- 1,100 individuals have been engaged through the Institute, and 200 have advanced to Scholar level, gaining access to mentorship, support teams, and career planning guidance.
- 250 regional and statewide stakeholders connected through defined pathways and wrap-around supports (academic, professional, and social).
- Participation and enrollment surpassed projections, underscoring both the model’s effectiveness and the urgency of expansion.

Central New York Region

- Foundational implementation supported by SUNY HealthCARES, the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, the Mother Cabrini Foundation, the Central New York Area Health Foundation, and the Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center.
- Developed in partnership with regional educators to align with the SUNY HealthCARES consortium’s goals across 11 SUNY campuses, impacting thousands of students.
- Since Fall of 2025, more than 130 members have already enrolled in CNY ICAM. The CNY portal now connects more than 50 local colleges, healthcare providers, and community organizations offering exploration, training, mentorship, shadowing, and employment opportunities.
- CNY ICAM contributes to the broader statewide impact of more than 1,200 prospective employees engaged and more than 250 partner organizations connected, with strong early gains in mentoring and career navigation.
- Leveraging ICAM to establish sustainable mentorship, career navigation, and engagement infrastructure and promote *all* healthcare industry career pathways.

These pilot deployments confirm ICAM’s ability to strengthen local pipelines, coordinate partners, and achieve measurable outcomes that can be replicated **across New York State**.

Momentum Across Regions

With successful pilot implementations in place, ICAM continues to gain momentum across multiple regions through a combination of federal, state, and philanthropic support.

This growing momentum provides a strong foundation for statewide expansion and ensures that ICAM’s agile, data-driven model continues to evolve alongside New York’s health workforce priorities.

The Opportunity

With HELP-funded initiatives poised to launch across multiple regions of the State, ICAM is designed to serve as the unifying framework that ensures these efforts are coordinated, aligned, and positioned for long-term success. Rather than operating as isolated regional projects, ICAM provides the shared infrastructure, standards, and accountability mechanisms needed to support consistent implementation. It also creates a strategic foundation

for leveraging regional investments into a cohesive statewide model—allowing successful strategies to be scaled, replicated, and sustained over time.

By serving as the connective tissue among regional initiatives, ICAM strengthens communication, streamlines data collection and reporting, promotes best-practice sharing, and maximizes return on investment. Most importantly, it ensures that regional workforce solutions contribute to a broader, integrated statewide strategy rather than remaining siloed efforts.

To achieve full statewide implementation and long-term sustainability of ICAM, additional funding will be necessary, as outlined in the chart below. While we have identified proposed funding levels by region, both the specific allocations and the regional distribution can be further refined through ongoing budget discussions between the Legislature and the Governor. This flexibility allows policymakers to align investments with regional workforce needs while maintaining the integrity of the statewide framework.

To support a deliberate, responsible, and sustainable rollout, we propose the following phased-in financing approach:

Phase	Funding	Focus	Outcome
Year 1 – Deploy	\$2.5 M	Launch ICAM in Hudson Valley, Capital District, Long Island, and Western NY	Achieve full statewide ICAM coverage
Year 2 – Scale & Optimize	\$1.5 M	Strengthen mentoring, workforce engagement, and data integration statewide	Expand and standardize operations
Years 3–5 – Sustain & Innovate	\$1 M per year	Maintain infrastructure, enhance analytics, and align with broader NYS workforce initiatives, programs, and goals	Long-term sustainability and continuous improvement

Total Investment Request: \$7 million over five years

By the end of Year 1, ICAM will operate in every region of New York. By Year 5, it will serve as a permanent, data-driven **infrastructure** for coordination, evaluation, and workforce impact measurement. This includes analysis on return on investment through the multiplied effect of economic impact in each region.

Alignment with Statewide Priorities

ICAM is designed to be agile and iterative, continuously complementing and strengthening New York’s broader healthcare workforce ecosystem. The framework evolves alongside statewide and regional initiatives, ensuring alignment, data-sharing, and measurable impact across all efforts focused on healthcare recruitment, retention, training, and equity.

Why Now

New York is facing a deepening healthcare workforce crisis, driven by longstanding staffing shortages, rising patient demand, burnout, and the growing complexity of care. Hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers, and home care agencies across the State are struggling to recruit and retain qualified professionals, particularly in underserved rural and urban communities.

This crisis is further compounded by the essential role that immigrants from around the world play in sustaining our healthcare system. Immigrant healthcare workers—across a wide range of roles including physicians, nurses,

direct care workers, technicians, and support staff—have long helped fill critical staffing gaps and ensure continuity of care in facilities statewide.

However, recent federal immigration enforcement actions and heightened activity by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have created fear and instability within many communities. These actions have had a chilling effect on portions of the healthcare workforce, disrupting staffing pipelines and exacerbating existing shortages. The resulting uncertainty not only affects individual workers and their families but also places additional strain on healthcare providers already operating under significant workforce pressures.

Without targeted policy and funding solutions that recognize and support the contributions of immigrant healthcare professionals, the State’s ability to maintain access to timely, high-quality care will remain at risk.

Early investments have validated ICAM’s design, agility, and effectiveness. With modest state investment, New York can complete statewide deployment, ensuring every region benefits from the same coordinated infrastructure, linking urban and rural communities through shared systems of opportunity, mentorship, and real-time workforce insight. The project ensures the support and promotion of existing and emerging healthcare workforce initiatives.

This investment completes the map, connects the system, and secures the future of New York’s healthcare workforce.

The Ask

We respectfully urge the Legislature to include funding for its rollout in your respective one-house budget proposals. Doing so will build on and formalize the productive conversations that have already taken place with the Governor’s Office, while signaling a strong, unified commitment to advancing this initiative.

Incorporating ICAM into the one-house budgets will help move the proposal from concept to action, provide the necessary fiscal framework to support responsible implementation, and create a clear pathway for collaboration during final budget negotiations. It will also demonstrate the Legislature’s recognition of the program’s value and its potential to deliver measurable impact across the state.

Thank you.

What Health Workforce New York Does:

- **Workforce development:** Supports healthcare organizations with strategies to recruit, onboard, train, and retain staff.
- **Partnership building:** Collaborates with hospitals, education institutions, community organizations, and government agencies to design solutions that improve workforce supply and capacity.
- **Training and education support:** Offers tools and programs (including digital platforms like HWapps) for career pipeline development, clinical training, continuing education, and workforce data support.
- **Data and research:** Helps collect, share, and use workforce data to better understand workforce needs and trends.

Its mission is to **improve access to quality healthcare** by helping healthcare organizations overcome staffing challenges and build diverse, equitable, and sustainable workforces.