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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Consumer and Labor Coalition Issues Open Letter Critical of Medicaid Redesign Proposals In Advance of New York State Budget Approval

Urges Curb of Executive Salaries, Responsible Reform to Support Safety Net Providers, Ensure Transparency in Public Dollars, and Expansion of Primary Care

New York, New York, March 28, 2011 – An open letter issued today by the Save Our Safety Net-Campaign (SOS-C), a broad-based coalition of consumer and labor groups, criticizes the inclusion in the state budget of various proposals put forward by Governor Cuomo's Medicaid Redesign Team, arguing that the proposals are harmful to both safety net health care providers and New Yorkers who rely on Medicaid as a lifeline. The coalition's letter suggests five alternative Medicaid reform proposals that the group is urging be included in a final state budget. SOS-C members are mobilizing community-based organizations, labor unions and individual Medicaid beneficiaries to urge legislators to re-open the Medicaid redesign process and find reforms that do not fall on the backs of low-income, medically underserved, immigrant and communities of color.

The open letter notes that Governor Cuomo's Medicaid Redesign Team, the body which drafted and approved reform proposals, included only one representative from a community organization and the process of deciding on proposals was hurried, opaque, and lacked meaningful debate and community input. SOS-C is concerned that a quick political victory is being prioritized over actual reform that will curb wasteful spending, make the Medicaid program more efficient, and most importantly, improve the quality of care for beneficiaries.

As drafted, the recent budget agreement's Medicaid proposals will mean cuts to Medicaid benefits, reduction of long-term and primary care services in communities across New York, slashing of budgets for safety net providers, and incentivising the merging or closure of safety net providers.

In response, the coalition has released its own proposals for reform, including:

1. Cap executive salaries when calculating Medicaid reimbursement rates.
2. Reject Proposal #67 which calls for the merging or closure of safety net providers.
3. Ensure accountability and transparency in public dollars, including Medicaid and charity care funds.
4. Allow for participation and openness in the state's applications to and negotiations with the federal government on Medicaid
5. Caution in the move to managed care for patients with complex and sensitive needs.

The Save Our Safety Net-Campaign was formed in 2005 in response to the Berger "Hospital Closing" Commission and continues to mobilize now to ensure the availability of high-quality health services for all New Yorkers.