

**Sign On Letter**  
*(Organizations listed alphabetically)*

**MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
NEW YORK STATE ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY OF ANESTHESIOLOGISTS  
NYS AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, CHAPTERS 1, 2 & 3  
THE NEW YORK STATE NEUROLOGICAL SOCIETY**

October 7, 2022

Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

**Re: Expansion of Healthcare Worker Bonus Program**

Dear Governor Hochul:

We are writing to urge you to expand the Health Care Worker Bonus (HCWBP) program in your 2023-24 Executive Budget to include all eligible staff in physician offices and other healthcare settings who see patients enrolled in publicly funded health insurance programs including Medicaid, Medicare, Child Health Plus and the Essential Plan.

The undersigned organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of physicians, residents and students in medicine. Our staffs (nurses, PAs, office staff, and others) deserve the same consideration as other health care workers who are designated beneficiaries of the HCWBP in the law. Our staffs were also on the front line during COVID and were exposed to the same life threatening, dangerous and traumatic conditions providing critical medical care to state citizens.

The current program is unfairly limited to our practices that see at least 20% of patients enrolled in Medicaid. Our staffs have regularly been referred to as heroes throughout the pandemic for the risks they endured and sacrifices they made, and yet the majority do not qualify for the HCWBP unless physician practices meet this threshold, which for a variety of reasons and factors, beyond their control, many will not. Therefore, we urge that this “20% Medicaid” restriction be eliminated so that all types of health care settings are equally able to provide these bonuses for their employees.

We commend your recognition of the State’s healthcare workers and applaud your announcement earlier this year: *“To restore our depleted healthcare workforce and build the healthcare system of tomorrow, Governor Hochul will make a more-than-\$10 billion, multi-year investment in healthcare, including more than \$4 billion to support wages and bonuses for healthcare workers. Key components of this multi-year investment include: \$1.2 billion of state support for healthcare and mental hygiene worker retention bonuses, with up to \$3,000 bonuses going to full-time workers who remain in their positions for one year, and pro-rated bonuses for those working fewer hours;”*

However, despite these strong public statements, the statutory language enacting the HCWBP includes restrictions which have ultimately left the majority of the state’s healthcare workforce ineligible for the

benefits which were touted as a “reward” for their heroic and exemplary service. The hard-working and dedicated staffs of physicians across the state are now asking why they are not eligible. They who toiled so diligently in the early days of COVID and who risked their lives to care for others during the pandemic

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also deserve to be recognized for their sacrifice, and such recognition shouldn't be limited by the type of insurance their patients have.

Further, we applaud your strong statements after the Budget was enacted: *“Creating better working conditions for healthcare workers will be a priority, with \$1.2 billion dedicated to frontline healthcare worker bonuses.”* Employees of outpatient medical practices have been on the frontline in the fight against COVID. They deserve recognition for their dedication and self-sacrifice. They also deserve the better working conditions promised for personnel already included in the current program.

We respectfully ask that you make these promises a reality in your upcoming Executive Budget and provide these bonuses to frontline health care workers regardless of the setting in which they work or the insurance plans which they participate in. We ask this on behalf of our members across the state whose nurses, physician assistants, patient-facing office staff, and other health care workers came to work during the pandemic to ensure the health and safety of all New Yorkers. These workers protected the health of ALL New Yorkers, regardless of what, if any, health insurance they were covered by. Their sacrifice should also be recognized and rewarded.

We urge you to correct this inequity by expanding the HCWBP in 2023 to ALL health care workers across practice settings by expanding the current criteria to include all provider and facilities that serve patients enrolled in Medicaid, Medicare, Child Health Plus, the Essential Plan, and/or other public health insurance program.

The HCWBP should be consistent with the claims made when it was created- as a reward for the heroic work of NY's health care professionals during COVID. The actual program falls far short of that goal, and we urge you to correct this inequity in your upcoming Executive Budget.

Sincerely,

Andrew B. Symons, MD  
President