



April 30, 2009

Senator Tom Duane
430 State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Duane:

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The Women's City Club of New York (WCC) is writing to express its support of the bill that you and Assembly Member Gottfried introduced, Senate Bill 3740/Assembly Bill 733, which would require Medicaid to pay for translation and interpretation services in hospitals, clinics and community health centers. WCC joins Medicaid Matters New York, the New York Immigration Coalition, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and the Empire Justice Center among many others in supporting this important legislation.

The WCC, founded in 1915, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan multi-issue activist organization dedicated to promoting public policies and responsive government to improve the lives of New Yorkers. Access to health care for all New Yorkers is a long held priority of the WCC.

While we recognize that communication assistance regulations are currently in place, failure to develop adequate language access practices in health care settings continues. Though some health care providers have made great strides in protecting the rights of New Yorkers to get care in the language they understand, language disparities still exist, resulting in delay of care, misdiagnoses, unnecessary tests, increased debt, lack of insurance coverage, and poor quality of care overall. The need for language access is particularly acute in community health centers, urban hospitals, and locations upstate that are refugee resettlement areas.

This bill is in line with the Administration's goals of creating a "patient first" delivery system, which the WCC strongly supports. To broaden access even further, we agree with organizations like the MMNY, that Medicaid should additionally pay for translation services in the home when that is the setting where care and services are provided.

This bill would not only take advantage of funding available for this purpose, it would require tracking of all funds associated with this reimbursement stream, which is essential in ensuring transparency and accountability. More importantly, it would end the discriminatory practice of limiting access to high-quality care due to lack of adequate communication between patient and provider.

We urge you to help all New Yorkers gain access to the best possible health care by passing S.3740/A.733 as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Ruth E. Acker
President

Phyllis Lusskin
Vice Chair of Health Committee and Past WCC President