Organizational Sign on Letter Urging the State Legislature to Pass and the Governor to Sign A.6194 (Joyner) / S.2530 (Golden)

Respond to: Lyndel Urbano, Manager of Government Affairs, GMHC 446 W 33rd Street, New York, NY 10001
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April 28, 2015

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Dean Skelos
New York State Senate President
Legislative Office Building, Room 909
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Governor Cuomo, Senate President Skelos, and Speaker Heastie:

The undersigned organizations and coalitions from across New York State request that you pass and sign A.6194 (Joyner) / S.2530 (Golden). This bill closes a loophole in state insurance law that allows the health insurance industry and pharmacy benefit managers to take away New Yorkers’ option to use their local pharmacies. Instead patients with private insurance are forced to use exclusive mail-order pharmacies to fill their prescriptions. As a result, consumers with life-threatening and chronic conditions face dangerous barriers to maintaining their health and privacy.

Consumers are forced to use mail-order pharmacies for medications deemed “specialty drugs” even when they are available at local pharmacies at the same cost. Affected medications include those used to treat Cancer, HIV, mental health conditions, Multiple Sclerosis, organ recipients, Hepatitis, infertility, Hemophilia, Lupus, Psoriasis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and many others.

Consumers can no longer access prescription drug counseling from trusted, local pharmacists. They experience unreasonable and dangerous delays in receiving their medication, which can interrupt drug regimens. If their medication is lost in the mail or stolen, they are forced to pay the full cost for replacements. Medications that require refrigeration are left to spoil at the front door. Information about sensitive medical conditions, including HIV status, is disclosed to family members or neighbors who receive medications in error.

When consumers are forced to use mail-order pharmacies, business is stripped away from community pharmacies. This deprives consumers of the personal service and culturally competent expertise of a New York State-licensed pharmacist. Community pharmacists develop relationships with local residents and know their medical histories, which is among the reasons why they help with medication adherence and the prevention of dangerous drug interactions.
Consumers, not the insurance companies, should choose whether to receive medications by mail or from a local pharmacy. We respectfully urge you to take action now to protect the health of New Yorkers by passing and signing A.6194 (Joyner) / S.2530 (Golden).

Sincerely,
(In Alphabetical Order)

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.
ACRIA
ACT UP
BOOM!Health
Coalition for Asian American Children & Families
Commission on Public Health Systems
Diaspora Community Services
Empire State Pride Agenda
Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC)
Harlem United
Health Care for All New York (HCFANY)
Hemophilia Association of New York, Inc. (serving the 14 downstate counties of NY)
Hispanic Federation
Latino Commission on AIDS
Long Island Minority AIDS Coalition
Lupus Alliance of Long Island/Queens
Lupus Alliance of Upstate New York
Lupus Foundation of Genesee Valley NY, Inc.
Lupus Foundation of Mid and Northern New York, Inc.
Lupus Foundation of Southern NY
Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign
New York Association on Independent Living
New York City Council Member Daniel Dromm, 25th District
New York Multiple Sclerosis Coalition Action Network
New York State Bleeding Disorder Coalition
New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage (NYFAHC)
NYC Hep B Coalition
NYC Hep C Task Force
Pharmacist Society of the State of New York
Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc. (RCAL)
S.L.E. Lupus Foundation
Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)
Southern Tier Independence Center
The Finger Lakes Independence Center
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center
The New York Immigration Coalition
Treatment Action Group
US Pain Foundation