



Dear Governor Hochul;

Last month the State Legislature passed legislation that will protect New Yorkers from predatory medical debt collection practices and unreasonable and surprise medical facility fees. We urge you to sign this legislation into law.

The first tenant of medicine is to “do no harm”. These two pieces of legislation will protect patients and ensure that they are not harmed by medical billing practices.

- **Ban medical liens and wage garnishments.** S6522A/A7363A will ban medical providers from using wage garnishments or taking out liens on a patient’s primary residence. Wage garnishment for collection of medical debt overwhelmingly hurts low income and minority workers. Research conducted by the Community Service Society analyzed the employers of a random sample of wage garnishment cases and found that the indebted patients work in low-wage occupations, including: health care and social service agencies; manufacturing; and retail. This research also found that 80% of liens were imposed in counties where the median family incomes were below 300% of the federal poverty level. The bill is narrowly tailored. Providers will still be able to collect medical debts by suing medical debtors and attaching other assets including bank accounts, second homes, cars and boats. Polling indicates that 7 out of 10 New Yorkers favor this bill—with strong Republican and Independent support.
- **Fair facility fees.** S2521C/A3470C bans facility fees for all preventive care, which should be free under the Affordable Care Act. Research shows that mammograms are the service most subjected to facility fees. This bill also requires providers to inform patients in advance when they will be charged one, thus reducing surprise bills and unexpected charges.

Medical Debt is a racial justice issue. In many parts of New York, people of color are more than twice as likely to have past due medical debt hurting their credit. For example, in Albany County residents of color are two and a half times more likely to have medical debt than white residents (26% of residents of color vs. 10% white residents). Statewide, 70 percent of New Yorkers are not confident that they can afford the costs of a major illness. More than 52,000 New Yorkers were sued between 2015 and 2020, including at least 5,000 during the height of the pandemic. These cases were pursued by nonprofit, charitable hospitals that collectively receive over \$1 billion dollars to support their provision of uncompensated care.



We urge you to sign S6522A/A7363A and S2521C/A3470C into law. This is common sense legislation that will help New York's families at a time when they are struggling with inflation and economic losses in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.