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September 14, 2012

James Introne
Deputy Secretary to the Governor
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Jim:

New York State is in the process of selecting its Essential Health Benefits (EHB) benchmark plan under the federal Affordable Care Act. I strongly urge that the State select the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) Empire Plan, the plan covering state employees, as its benchmark plan.

It is important that the EHB be as comprehensive as reasonably possible. This will help protect the health of New Yorkers and protect from the financial burden of inadequate coverage. Unlike a benchmark based on a private insurance company's benefit package, the NYSHIP Empire Plan is a package developed with input from New York's publicly-elected government and from representatives of the covered consumers.

I have read the extensive and thoughtful comments submitted by Health Care for All New York, making the same recommendation. Those comments make the case very effectively.

I believe it would be inappropriate for New York State to say that its elected and appointed officials and hundreds of thousands of other public employees should be covered by the NYSHIP Empire Plan package, but other New Yorkers should get by with less comprehensive health benefits.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Best regards.

Very truly yours,

Richard N. Gottfried
Chair
Assembly Committee on Health

cc: Donna Frescatore
Nirav Shah, MD
Danielle Holahan
Troy Oeschner