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**REMARKS OF SENATOR BILL PERKINS TO THE NEW YORK STATE
NURSES ASSOCIATION (NYSNA) | RE: SINGLE PAYER
HEALTHCARE**

Good afternoon to each and every one of you.

There is only one way to commence my remarks—and that's with heartfelt praise for each and every one of our nurses that are gathered here today. The New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) is one of the finest, most respected and tenacious advocacy organizations in the entire State of New York. You look out for each other—your sisters and brothers—in the nursing profession and the union movement—including my daughter Kiva Hassina-Perkins, a nurse and union organizer; you are on the front lines and the bedsides tending to our loved ones in their time of need; you are continuously organizing on issues of compelling concern to our communities; and you are unconditionally



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committed, as am I, to finally bringing true universal healthcare to every single New Yorker.

It's a testament to your powerful advocacy that I see your members wherever I go. Whether it be in the halls of the Capitol, on the steps of City Hall, on 125th Street or at community meetings at the neighborhood, borough and state-wide level—the New York State Nurses Association is an active and driving force. And look at the results; just this year you led the charge against the reckless and ill-conceived plan to privatize chronic dialysis facilities across our City. Thanks in large measure to your efforts—which always place patients first—we won—and when patients are placed first we all win. Your calling saves lives in the first instance; your collective advocacy saves lives on the macro level—that's what makes you so unique and so valuable a public good for our State.



Each of you has a supreme quality that trumps all others in this life—and in this work that we do professionally, politically and otherwise: courage. Each one of you is courageous—in the jobs you do on a daily basis, in picketing for your rights and the shared right to serve your patients better, in working to address the most seismic issues of the day—from climate change to universal, single payer healthcare—you are imbued with the exceptional quality of courage.

It's totally appropriate that our campaign to finally enact single payer healthcare begins here today—with our nurses. Nurses are such a singular focal point in the healthcare system: they are laser-focused on the quality of patient care; they are not pencil pushing over a spreadsheet to cut costs (and reduce care) but instead are totally devoted to the well-being of patients; they don't get caught up in the layers of red tape and inefficiency that inflate costs and



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delay or deny essential medical services. Nurses are the heartbeat and the conscience of our healthcare system. As such, nurses are the ideal ambassadors for New York Health—a true model of Universal, Single Payer Healthcare.

Contextually speaking, Obamacare was an incremental step, important in its own right, yes—but it did not usher in the total “systems change” that we so desperately need to enact unconditional healthcare reform. The complexity of our current system—with monolithic stacks of paperwork; billings to fourth, fifth and sixth parties; tests but no treatment; wildly disparate health outcomes; and a confusing marketplace of policies and coverages is simply crying out for wholesale change. No matter your politics or your ideology, when you look at the sheer numbers and the results on the ground (and in people’s lives) we know that we can do so much better. And, ironically, but importantly, this is



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a classic “less is more” moment. Single payer simplifies the system, rationalizes it and will finally deliver on the promise of a healthcare system that works for all of us.

Our New York Health Bill writes an important moral maxim into law: “Your health is your wealth!” Succinctly stated, it moves from an inherently flawed model that is based upon private profit and greed—at the expense of quality of care and wise tax dollar investment—to a system that treats the health of individuals and families as a universal public good that is always given top priority. Healthcare is finally recognized as a human right, not a market-based commodity. We can sum New York Health up in three words: “Patients before profits!”—pure and simple.

Many of you know the details of our New York Health legislation by heart and I will take just a moment to summarize the six



fundamental pillars: New York Health will: (1) Provide Universal Coverage to all—with absolutely no premiums, deductibles, co-pays and/or other financial obstacles; (2) Provide Universal Benefits to all, including primary and preventative care that covers all services from laboratory tests, prescription drugs, dental/vision care and rehabilitative services; (3) Streamline our system away from the onerous fee-for service (private greed) approach towards a non-profit model that prioritizes the health of patients (as a public good); (4) Rationally fund this public system through a progressively graduated payroll deduction and a modest but meaningful surcharge on high-income earners; (5) End the “local share” of Medicaid funding which will amount to billions of dollars in savings for all of the Counties in our State; and (6) Establish New York State as the leader in the Post-Obamacare policy landscape by adopting a universal healthcare model that forever removes the “profit motive” and the deleterious effects thereof—



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from our system. The Empire State needs to lead on this issue—we can look to Vermont, Canada, the United Kingdom, Taiwan, New Zealand, Norway, Denmark and Sweden for instructive lessons and replicable models, as well as inspiration—but ultimately this movement is about enshrining a universal, fundamental human right in our world-class State. When we do things right by patients in New York State—when we commence to save our counties billions of dollars and improve healthcare outcomes in dramatic fashion—states will then be lining up to replicate the New York Health model—and each of you will not only have built the foundation here at home but you’ll have constructed an escalating effect in this country and indeed, the world.

Our campaign to bring about the passage of New York Health begins in earnest this Fall and our approach will be as comprehensive as the care offered under this initiative. Led by



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longtime Assembly Health Chair and unstinting single payer advocate Dick Gottfried, we will crisscross the entire state for a series of hearings in major cities (Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse for starters)—and we will need your members to turn out in strong numbers and offer compelling testimony gleaned from your heroic service on the front lines of our healthcare system. We'll need you to mobilize in key areas to drive the clear message home to undecided legislators that this plan is in the best interest of all New Yorkers—it increases care, will help us reduce health disparities, will improve patient outcomes and will save the State, and in particular our 62 counties, billions of dollars. You'll have to fight through the hype and the spin with facts, figures, real-life examples and connect deeply with people; it's a job that is a natural component of your calling. **And so, because you are so renowned for your advocacy and courage, I am proud to share an empowerment opportunity with each of you right now.**



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Please take out your cell phone right this moment and text the word Healthcare4all to 877877 {for repetition purposes, that's Healthcare, the number 4, all texted to 877877}.

When you get a response, please enter your e-mail and zip code—in doing so you will: (1) Indicate your strong support for universal, single payer healthcare in New York State and; (2) Pledge to join a brand new network of Registered Nurses in facilities all across our State that are coming together to lead the fight for healthcare for all in New York.

Truly, as you have just demonstrated—who better than nurses—with your glowing reputation for integrity, honesty and activism—to step up to the plate and declare that you are “all in” for New York Health. As this movement progresses we’ll need your courage to highlight the sweeping benefits of New York Health and to help



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pierce the veil of false, fear-based arguments by those who callously profit from the status quo. We'll need you to help traditional democrats achieve a commanding majority in the State Senate. We'll need you in Albany at rallies and lobby days and speaking to key decision-makers as votes approach. And, finally, in a moment of culmination connected back to the collective work we begin right now, this very moment—we will need you to implement New York Health all over this great State.

Conclusively, I look forward to keeping in close contact with all of you as we work in common cause on legislation that will save the State billions of dollars and improve health outcomes for all—across the board. For those of you who are represented by legislators who support New York Health, please reach out to them and thank them; for those of you represented by elected officials who are still undecided on the issue of the day, I hope you will set



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up meetings to educate and persuade them with your singular combination of passion and expertise.

My continued thanks to you for all that you do to make our State a more caring, humane and healthy place.