



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Rallies Against Devastating Pharmacy Cuts

CATHARINE YOUNG October 26, 2008

Senator Pledges to Fight Cuts that Cost Jobs, Limit Access to Health Care

JAMESTOWN, NY – The Protect Pharmacy Patients coalition today hailed Senator Catharine Young for her successful effort to fend off budget cuts that would have devastated community pharmacies during the August special session of the State Legislature, as well as for her pledge to continue to fight any cuts that may be proposed in the upcoming special session next month.

"Particularly in rural, underserved areas, the closure of a community pharmacy often leaves local residents without another pharmacy for miles," Senator Young said. "Not only that, but the personal care and service offerings community pharmacies provide are invaluable to seniors and the critically ill. As we prepare for the special session in November, we must look at ways to reduce spending. However, I know that any more cuts to pharmacies do not make sense and in fact could result in increased costs to the state. We need the jobs that community pharmacies provide, and patients need the care that local pharmacies provide."

The Protect Pharmacy Patients coalition has led the fight against budget cuts that have jeopardized patient access to critical healthcare services. After the State imposed cuts on July 1st that resulted in a 70 percent reduction in reimbursements and \$50 million in losses to the pharmacy sector, Governor Paterson proposed even deeper cuts that would have

devastated community pharmacies around the State. Thanks to support from Senator Young and other members of the State Legislature, the coalition was successful in defeating those proposed cuts.

“Senator Young led the charge to reject the reckless cuts proposed in August, and we know we can count on her to keep leading the charge when the Legislature convenes again in November,” said Nasir Mahmood, RPh, pharmacy owner and President of the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York. “The State has already gone too far with its cuts, and we simply cannot afford any more. As pharmacies close, New York’s neediest patients are left with nowhere to turn for medication and treatment, and New Yorkers will find that health care costs will actually increase. This is not something that our patients or state government can afford.”

New York currently ranks last in Medicaid reimbursement rates for pharmacies, which in some cases have been forced to drop out of programs that serve patients who rely on Medicaid, EPIC, and the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). In other cases, the cuts have forced pharmacies to close their doors, costing jobs and limiting patient access to health care.

Professor Emily M. Ambizas of St. John’s University, in a recently released white paper on the issue, documented the devastating effects the pharmacy cuts have had on community pharmacies throughout the State. As local pharmacies have been forced to withdraw from the Medicaid program or close their doors altogether, more and more pharmacy patients are turning to hospitals and emergency rooms to receive medication or treatment for worsening medical conditions that could have been prevented through the care of a local pharmacist. The result is higher costs for the State, Professor Ambizas found.

“Senator Young stood up for patients and small businesses by fighting against additional

budget cuts that would have harmed some of our most vulnerable populations,” said Jim Rovegno, owner of Lakewood Apothecary. “We thank Senator Young for protecting pharmacy patients.”

Protect Pharmacy Patients is a coalition of health care advocates and pharmacists who have embarked on a statewide campaign to fight State budget cuts for community pharmacies. The coalition includes: the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York, regional pharmacy affiliates throughout the state, New York StateWide Senior Action Council, AIDS Community Services of Western New York, Full Circle Health, the Bangladesh-American Pharmacists Association, the Indo-American Pharmacists Society, the Italian-American Pharmacists Society, the Korean-American Pharmacists Association, and the Pakistani-American Pharmacists Association.