



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Hugh T. Farley

Senate Passes Legislation to Require Inmates to Make Medical Copayments

Hugh T. Farley

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State Senator Hugh T. Farley (R, C, I - Schenectady) and his colleagues in the New York State Senate recently passed a bill (S.476) that would protect the taxpayers of New York State by requiring state and county correctional facility inmates to make copayments for health care visits.

This is the same policy that is in place in the federal prison system and two-thirds of the states. New York taxpayers spend over \$121 million per year to provide top-of-the-line health care to prisoners, amounting to about \$2,000 per inmate. This legislation requires prisoners to pay \$7 per visit as a co-payment for medical treatment. No inmate would be denied medical treatment for an inability to pay, but this requirement would reduce the excessive and non-emergency health care visits currently taking place in our prisons and save millions of taxpayer dollars each year.

In 2000, the federal government successfully adopted and implemented a copayment system for federal prisoners, saving the Department of Justice millions of dollars every year. More than 2/3 of states have already enacted co-payments for inmate medical services, including California, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Nevada. In states that have instituted a copay program, the abuse in the number of sick call visits by inmates was reduced by as much as 76 percent, also saving these states millions of taxpayer dollars.