



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin S. Parker

## Senator Parker Advocates for Establishment of a Brooklyn Health Commission to Fix Brooklyn's Health Care Crisis

KEVIN S. PARKER August 1, 2013

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**Brooklyn, NY-** On July 25th, State Senator Kevin Parker called upon Governor Cuomo to take executive action to address Brooklyn's ongoing health crisis. The Senator's letter requested the Governor to empanel a Brooklyn Health Commission based on the one provided for in Senator Parker's bill, S.5916, which would conduct a comprehensive epidemiological study of Brooklyn, and analyze the borough's health care assets in order to construct a solution that would not only fix Brooklyn's current crisis, but would bring Brooklyn's health care system

into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

“The existing trends in Kings County are unsustainable,” said Senator Parker. “Brooklyn is the largest county in New York, with more than 2.5 million residents, and would rank as the fourth most populous city in the United States if it was an independent city, but its only medical school and public hospital, and many of its private hospitals, are on the verge of collapse. New York State cannot afford to let that happen.”

Brooklyn’s crisis is a amalgamation of financially challenged hospitals, lack of clinics and ambulatory care, declining Medicaid reimbursement rates, and reduced state support for “safety net” hospitals. This crisis requires a comprehensive solution that aligns the health care needs of its residents with the health care resources and provider strengths of the borough. According to the Berger Commission, the health care system in Kings County is mismanaged, has been “broken” since at least 2006, and is in need of fundamental repairs. Unlike the Berger Commission however which focused on reducing “excess capacity,” the Brooklyn Health Commission would be focused on reorganizing and better using Brooklyn’s existing health care assets and providers, and would also strategically deploy reserves necessary in case of public emergencies like Hurricane Sandy. After all, 8 months after Hurricane Sandy, Coney Island Hospital is still closed, and without the “excess” beds and health care professionals in Brooklyn’s health care network, there would have been a massive shortage of beds in Brooklyn and near inability to provide quality health care.

“I have been working on saving Downstate Medical Center, Long Island College Hospital (Downstate/LICH), and Kingsboro Psychiatric Center with my colleague Senator Eric Adams for the past two years, but Brooklyn’s health care crisis affects all of its hospitals and health care providers,” continued the Senator. “As Governor Cuomo has recognized, Brooklyn’s entire health care system needs to be restructured, fortified against financial stresses, and improved. The Brooklyn Health Care commission would provide Brooklyn with a solution that would take the county’s health care system into the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> century in a sustainable and vibrant manner, with a well-functioning health care network providing high quality care to all Brooklyn residents. That is why I, and Assemblyman Karim Camara, my Assembly partner, introduced this bill.”

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***About Senator Kevin Parker***

Senator Kevin S. Parker is intimately familiar with the needs of his ethnically diverse Brooklyn community that consists of 318,000 constituents in Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood, Ditmas Park, Kensington, Windsor Terrace, and Park Slope. He is the Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee and the Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Assistant Democratic Leader for Intergovernmental Affairs, and Chair of the Democratic Task Force on New Americans.