



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

## 9/24/2010: Press Conference on Hospital Closure Planning Act

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY September 23, 2010

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**Hospital Closure Planning Act" Sent to Governor's Desk for Signature**

**Bill Requires State To Address Impact Of Hospital Closings On Communities**

Elected officials from across the City today urged Governor Paterson to sign the "Hospital Closure Planning Act" (**A.10748A/S.7483A**). The charge was led at a press conference this afternoon with the bill's sponsors, Assemblyman Rory Lancman (D-Queens) and Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica).

The bill would require the NYS Department of Health to hold a public forum and report on the impact of a hospital's closure on the surrounding community's access to medical care. The legislation comes in response to the recent closings of Mary Immaculate and St. John's hospitals in Queens, and St. Vincent's hospital in Manhattan, where in each instance the state lacked a clear and comprehensive plan for how to meet the ongoing healthcare needs of those affected communities. The Governor vetoed similar legislation last year (video of last year's press conference urging Governor Paterson to sign the bill before it was vetoed can be viewed [here](#)), and the new bill was drafted with the cooperation of the state department of health and the executive chamber to address the Governor's concerns.

"A hospital's closing should not mean the closing off of healthcare services for the surrounding community, but that's what happens unless the state listens to the community and makes plans for meeting its healthcare needs," said Assemblyman Lancman. "We may not be able to stop a hospital from closing, but we ought to be able to measure the impact of that closing and come up with a plan for serving the residents who relied on that hospital for healthcare services," said Assemblyman Rory Lancman.

"Losing a hospital can adversely affect a community and its residents. We've seen it happen here in Southeast Queens and most recently in Manhattan, with the closing of St. Vincent's hospital. Due to current economic climate New York State is facing we must ensure that neighborhoods across the state can access alternative health care when a hospital closes. It is equally important to involve communities in the planned closure of a hospital and in replacing the most important services residents rely on. The residents of the community

where a hospital is located have the best understanding of the services they need and what needs to be done,” said Senator Shirley Huntley

“The Borough of Queens has historically been under-bedded and underserved and during my tenure as Borough President this was further exacerbated by the closure of four hospitals. The leadership of our 10 remaining hospitals have worked hard to “rightsize” their institutions to meet the growing demands for health care in Queens. I commend their hard work and dedication to the people of Queens. However, the passage of this Bill will help to make their jobs easier and at the same time ensure that all the residents of Queens have access to quality healthcare within their individual communities. I applaud my colleagues in the NYS Assembly and Senate for making this legislation a reality and I urge Governor Paterson to sign this very important Bill,” said Queens Borough President Helen Marshall.

“In Manhattan, the community has been up in arms about the closing of St. Vincent’s Hospital. People are also concerned about what services the community will have, and who will provide them,” said Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard Gottfried. “An enormous amount of time and effort has been put into trying to resolve that crisis, including by the State Health Department. But the community has had little formal opportunity to be heard or to know what the response is.”

“Closing a hospital can severely cripple a community’s ability to access quality healthcare. Knowing the ramifications and impact a hospital’s closure will have, will allow for comprehensive planning to ensure that services, programs and the health needs of the area continue to be met. Governor Paterson must sign this bill into law to protect the future of healthcare in New York,” said Assemblywoman Audrey I. Pheffer.

"The loss of St. Vincent's has not only dramatically reduced access to healthcare for Manhattan's Westside, but the loss of jobs and foot traffic from visitors has devastated the

neighborhood's economy," said Assemblymember Deborah Glick. "No other neighborhood should experience the shock of rapid closure as we have."

"When a patient is in urgent need of care, they do not have the luxury of even a few extra minutes on their hands. But when a community can plan ahead we can literally save lives. I strongly thank AM Rory Lancman and Sen. Huntley for spearheading this issue and urge the Governor to sign this piece of legislation," said Assemblymember Grace Meng.

"We have lost hospitals here in Queens and around the state, but people still need medical attention. We can't wait until a hospital closes to figure out how we will get the medical services we desperately need. Making the Hospital Closure Planning Act state law will give communities the information that they need to develop a plan for how to fill the void left by losing a hospital. This is a matter of life and death," said Assemblyman Mike Miller.