



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Griffo and Buttenschon announce initiative to address doctor shortage in New York State

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UTICA – New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, and state Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, D-Marcy, have unveiled a major policy initiative that will help to improve access to quality medical care in New York State. Deputy Minority Leader Griffo and Assemblywoman Buttenschon were joined by Dr. John DeTraglia for a news conference announcing the initiative Friday.

According to a report by the Healthcare Association of New York State, health system and medical providers have difficulty recruiting and retaining primary care physicians and other

specialists, especially in Upstate New York communities.

Some of the reasons behind this shortage include an aging primary care workforce, medical school debt, fewer medical residents choosing primary care due to a lower salary, challenging insurance issues, a lack of interest in practicing in under-served areas of the state and concerns regarding quality of life.

To address New York's physician shortage, Deputy Minority Leader Griffo has introduced a package of legislation to boost the number of family physicians practicing in New York, especially in upstate communities. The bills were developed following several meetings between Deputy Minority Leader Griffo and doctors and medical professionals, including Dr. Michael Ratner, Dr. John DeTraglia, Dr. Sudershan Dang and Dr. Steven Kussin and many other active and retired physicians from the region. Assemblywoman Buttenschon will be introducing similar bills in the Assembly.

The initiative spearheaded by Deputy Minority Leader Griffo and Assemblywoman Buttenschon would:

- Improve the Doctors Across New York program, which helps train and place physicians in underserved communities, by increasing the benefit for the programs that help recruit new physicians, help doctors repay educational loans or establish or join practices.
- Allow students enrolled in a state-supported medical school to participate in the Excelsior Scholarship program and for non-resident students residing within a certain distance of the border of New York State to have tuition rates reduced to two-thirds what they would otherwise be charged as an out-of-state student (S5953).
- Expand START-UP NY options to primary care (S5663) to allow physicians looking to establish a primary care office in the field of primary care services to access the START-UP NY program. Additionally, expanding the START-UP NY program to include primary care services also would increase access to primary care physicians in otherwise underserved areas of the state.

The initiative also would direct the Governor to task the state Department of Health to

develop a designated shortage area for rural health clinics. The federal Department of Health and Human Services formulates what constitutes as underserved areas, as well as shortage areas. However, some rural areas cannot obtain federal benefits due to certain criteria that must be met in order to receive those benefits. A state designation opens the door for certain rural areas that might otherwise be forced to endure shortages without significant assistance.

“The Doctors Across New York program has been successful in attracting physicians to underserved areas throughout the state,” Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. “However, our state continues to experience doctor shortages in both urban and rural communities. It is my hope that, as a result of this initiative that I have developed along with Assemblywoman Buttenschon and medical experts, we will be able to recruit and retain doctors and improve the quality and availability of healthcare for all New Yorkers.”

“As many upstate families know, it’s difficult to find specialists or primary care doctors that are accepting new patients or whose practices are close to them,” Assemblywoman Buttenschon said. “While the Doctors Across New York program has helped attract medical professionals to the state, we must do more to ensure upstate communities – both urban and rural – have access to affordable, high-quality health care. I look forward to working with Deputy Minority Leader Griffo to find new ways to encourage out-of-state doctors to set up practices here and New York doctors to remain in the state.”