



**Written Testimony of  
Healthy Community Alliance, Inc.**

**New York State Joint Legislative Public Hearing on  
2015-16 Executive Health Budget  
Monday, February 2nd, 2015  
10:00 AM**

**Chairs:**

Senator Kemp Hannon  
Assemblyman Richard Gottfried

**Submitted by:**

Sharon J Mathe, Executive Director

The Healthy Community Alliance, Inc. (HCA) is one of New York State's Rural Health Networks incorporated in 1996. Our Board of Directors is representative of sectors including school districts, higher education, business, faith-based, hospitals, health care agencies, county government, the Seneca Nation of Indians, and consumers. Our service area includes Cattaraugus County and the rural southern portions of Erie County in Western New York yet our influence is recognized regionally to nationally. HCA's mission is to improve quality of life in rural communities through broad-based inclusive partnerships that support wellness and prevention.

This year the Governor's Executive Budget bundled the Rural Health Network Development program (RHND) (which previously had its own budget line) with seven otherwise unrelated health workforce development programs. The budget calls for 15.1% across the board cuts. Un-bundle RHND from workforce...They do not belong on the same budget line for Rural Health Networks are much more than work force programs. Please restore RHND to \$6.4 million and Rural Access to \$9.8 million.

Rural Health Networks are economic engines for our country communities, especially during trying financial times. HCA for the time period from 2007 through 2014 (eight years) has received from the Charles D. Cook Office of Rural Health, NYS Department of Health approximate funding totaling \$1.8 million, an average of \$225,000 per year. Unlike many other funding sources the RHND allows for operational costs so staff are able to develop a broader impact aligned with our RHND work plan, the Affordable Care Act, The Prevention Agenda, Population Health Improvement Program and the State's

Health Innovation Plan During that same interval HCA was able to leverage RHND support to generate a total revenue of \$10.7 million, an average of \$1.3 million per year HCA has grown from 6 employees in 2004 to 18 in 2014 with 6 new employees to be added in 2015.

In addition to the \$10.7 noted previously, another \$9.9 million has been invested to renovate the former High School in Gowanda becoming Academy and Community Places: 32 low income senior apartments and leased space on the first floor for a physician group ( a practice formerly closed to new patients and now willing to serve HCA seniors), Senior Wellness and Nutrition site (60 meals a day), social model daycare (opening this Spring), a Family Support Center and other behavioral health providers supporting an aging in place concept with broader community engagement. This setting sustains the New York State Prevention Agenda's priority areas of promoting healthy and safe environments and promoting mental health and preventing substance abuse.

We provide a different version of the aging in place concept in the Town of Concord where the Springville/Concord Elder Network (SCENE) serves this community and beyond assisting elderly residents to remain in their homes and neighborhood. In 2014, SCENE hosted 310 events including discussion groups, book club, senior fitness classes, a care giver support group and much more. These programs were provided by 268 volunteers and attended by 2,545 participants and all managed through an 800 number and a .25 FTE coordinator at a cost of \$ 9,500! Again tied to the Prevention Agenda.

We have partnered with Cattaraugus County Departments of Health, Social Services, Aging and the Office of Emergency Services to employ soon to be 11 people who work at the aforementioned offices yet are HCA employees. This conserves dwindling county government resources and allows services to be made available in the community that might otherwise need to be eliminated.

These programs represent only a small portion of our objectives and successful outcomes. Please contact HCA with questions or to request additional program data.

Un-bundle RHDN from workforce...They do not belong on the same budget line with Rural Health Networks for we are much more than work force programs. Please restore RHND to \$6.4 million and Rural Access to \$9.8 million.

Your service to New York State is greatly appreciated.

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