

**Testimony for Public Hearing
Senate Health Committee**

February 3, 2014

RE: 2014-2015 Executive Budget Proposal: Topic "Health/Medicaid"

Testimony Presented By:

James Mohler, MD

Senior-Vice President for Translational Research
Chair, Department of Urology
Professor of Oncology
Roswell Park Cancer Institute

Edward P. Gelmann, MD

Clyde Wu Professor of Oncology
Deputy Director, Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center
Columbia University

National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers are at the forefront of translating scientific knowledge from promising laboratory discoveries into new treatments for cancer patients and are funded and designated after rigorous peer-review.

New York State is home to three of these prestigious centers; the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center at Columbia University, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute and Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

The Cancer Centers Program recognizes centers around the country that meet rigorous criteria for world-class, state-of-the-art programs in multidisciplinary cancer research. These centers put significant resources into developing research programs, faculty, and facilities that will lead to better approaches to prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer.

Our centers receive this designation through a rigorous National Institutes of Health merit based, peer review system, and the centers can only maintain their status by continuing to meet these standards.

With the first class research being generated from these New York institutions, it is disheartening that the \$2.9 million in funds collected in the Prostate Cancer Research, Detection and Education Fund are not being allocated to fight this terrible disease.

We are pleased that the Governor is looking at solutions for distribution of these prostate cancer funds, but we strongly advocate for a peer review process similar to what is outlined in A.8434 (Farrell)/S.6233 (Ranzenhofer). Any bill must provide for an efficient and effective method to insure that funds raised to fight prostate cancer are allocated promptly for approved education and research projects to advance the prevention of and cure of this disease. Enabling the cancer centers and the commissioner of health to make recommendations on and approve appropriate

use of these funds through competitive grants will ensure that money is directed to vital lifesaving research in New York. Furthermore it will also ensure a stream of funds to be used to promote and advertise the New York State tax check off.

The expertise these institutions have in the peer review process would ensure that these funds are distributed to the most promising research and programing. The NIH peer review process forms the cornerstone of the NIH research mission and ensures that applications are evaluated by scientific experts in a manner free from inappropriate influences. The core values of peer review drive the NIH and would drive the three institutions to fund the best prostate cancer research.

The intentions behind the creation of tax check-off programs were to give taxpayers the opportunity to contribute financially to education and research on this deadly disease. However, as a recent report by New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli highlighted, taxpayer participation levels in tax check off programs have declined. The Farrell/Ranzenhofer bill would provide funding to promote and educate taxpayers on this important program and ensure its longevity and success.

We respectfully ask that you consider this peer review approach to distributing these critical funds and to include funds to promote and market the program.