

**Written Testimony of
JNT Rural Health Network**

**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:
Mark F. Prunoske, MS
SVP, Finance/CFO Thompson Health**

1. The JNT Rural Health Network is comprised of the service regions of three health systems located in the Finger Lakes including Jones Memorial Hospital located in Wellsville, New York; Noyes Health located in Dansville, New York and Thompson Health located in Canandaigua, New York. The JNT Rural Health Network is comprised of three nonprofit member agencies providing hundreds of preventative health and wellness programs and services to thousands of residents and families who live in Ontario, Wayne, Seneca, Monroe, Yates, Allegany, Livingston, Steuben and surrounding counties.
2. We respectfully ask for the separation of Rural Health Network Development and Rural Health Care Access Development programs from Health Workforce Development as proposed in the 2015-16 Executive Budget. We ask that these two programs be restored to individual budget lines at level funding for 2015-16.
 - This year the Governor's Executive Budget calls for 15.1% across the board cuts and or contract cancelations for 8 programs critical to rural health. Among these is the RHND program.
 - We ask that you un-bundle RHDN from workforce. We feel strongly that they do not belong on the same budget line. We respectfully ask that you restore RHDN to \$6.4 million and Rural Access to \$9.8 million.
3. The Rural Health Grant funds essential community programming the JNT provides free-of-charge or at low cost to families based on the New York State Prevention Agenda and county health assessment data. The JNT Rural Health Network is committed to promoting health and wellness initiatives based on the objectives listed below:

- **Prevent Chronic Disease by Reducing the Prevalence of Obesity in Adults and Children – Encourage Healthy Choices**
 By identifying health risks and promoting healthy lifestyles to the community, we provide programs that help reduce instances of obesity and promote preventative care by providing education, encouraging exercise and healthy food choices, and increasing overall fitness. Through this collaborative work, we identify possible health risks within our populations to assist in the prevention of chronic disease.
- **Provide Diabetes Education and Screening – Prevent Chronic Disease Risk Factors**
 Community Health Assessments rated Chronic Disease (Diabetes) Management and education a top priority and need in the region. The JNT Network's objective is to educate the community about the importance of diabetes screening and to educate diabetics on proper nutrition and blood sugar management. The goal is to increase education to the community and for diabetics and to decrease HbA1c levels among diabetics. Through RHN funding, many diabetes education and screening programs are held throughout the region.
- **Promote Mental Health and Identify Depression/Suicide Risk Factors in Youth.**
 The Office of the Surgeon General's National Prevention Strategy, *America's Plan for Better Health and Wellness* states that the best opportunities to improve the public's mental health are interventions delivered before a disorder manifests itself, or prevent its development. Through review and compilation of Community Health Assessment information from counties within the Network, Mental Health Issues for Adolescents was a common themes and it emerged as one of the Network's top priorities. Programs to help identify depression and suicide risk factors before crisis and community education about adolescent mental health issues are objective of JNT programming. A decrease in the number of at risk students is the goal.

Above are just a few examples of the many essential programs and services that are funded through the Rural Health Grants. We ask that you please restore individual budget lines and level funding to this program.

4. We respectfully ask for the separation of Rural Health Network Development and Rural Health Care Access Development programs from Health Workforce Development as proposed in the 2015-16 Executive Budget. We ask that these two programs be restored to individual budget lines at level funding for 2015-16.
5. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions or concerns regarding the JNT Rural Health Network or about this request. Thank you for your consideration.

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