

To the New York State Senate Assembly Members:

There is a wealth of opposition for the New York Health Act, A.5248/S.3577, today. The majority of which comes from corporate interests. Though there are some public officials who have voiced their own strong opinions against this bill. In particular, Assemblyman Goodell who declared that passing this bill would be the equivalent of “imposing a socialist government monopoly on health care”. Equitable healthcare for every New York citizen seems an odd place to raise fear-laden rhetoric about socialist government. Especially considering some of our most vital public systems run off socialist structures; Fire Departments, Police Departments, Social Security, and the salaries paid to public officials such as Assemblyman Goodell, just to name a few.

However, this is not a day to be caught up in the political mire of a fruitless debate on which systems should be socialized or not. This is a day to consider what lies at the very heart of this hearing: A matter of life and death.

There are many reasons for New York to be the first state to adopt a single-payer system. The most vital is that we as a state, and as a nation, are falling behind. Our healthcare system is a disgrace compared to the rest of the developed world. One of the worst results from this reticence to progress was formally acknowledged by both Governor Cuomo and New York City Mayor, Bill De Blasio, in August 2018.

New York’s Maternal Mortality Rate is on par with the U.S. national average, the worst national Maternal Mortality rate among developed nations. In public statements, Governor Cuomo and Mayor De Blasio announced their commitment to resolving this health crisis on every front. Their new healthcare initiative is aimed at conducting implicit bias training for healthcare providers, updating hospital birthing facilities, and engaging in community outreach to educate the public and communicate with the people effected most by this crisis: Mothers.

This initiative is unfortunately not enough to combat the variety of institutional and environmental factors which contribute to the Maternal Mortality Rate. One of the main issues being that the current healthcare system cannot provide enough financial support to fully staff hospitals to meet the increasing demand of delivering mothers, and this system cannot provide enough support to caregivers such as mid wives and doulas to offset the demands placed on hospitals. Fortunately, an obvious solution to this problem lays before us.

This is an opportunity for the Senate to show its own commitment to protecting the lives of mothers throughout the state of New York. Adopting a comprehensive single-payer system means equitable healthcare for every citizen. The New York State Government can make the choice to literally save hundreds, if not thousands of lives by passing the New York Health Act.

As you reflect on the statements delivered today, I ask you to keep the core of this issue in mind. Your decision holds the weight of life and death. Thank you.

- Alan Nero

