



July 11, 2008

Governor David A. Paterson  
State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

The American Cancer Society asks that you disapprove A 395-A (Morelle)/S-6385-A (Alesi) because it offers a false health insurance promise, particularly to people with serious chronic illness, such as cancer.

We strongly believe that under-insurance is a serious problem for our state, virtually as serious as the problem of no insurance. Cancer patients testified at every one of the recent Partnership for Coverage hearings around the state, and their stories spoke powerfully of the need for insurance reform that offers people access to coverage that is adequate, as well as available and affordable.

Does New York wish to encourage an insurance plan that denies cancer patients the ability to complete the prescribed course of life-saving chemotherapy? The American Cancer Society certainly cannot endorse such a “reform,” and we sincerely hope you won’t be taken in either.

Yet that is exactly the problem with the Healthy New York option being promoted by this legislation. It has woefully inadequate drug coverage. Your own Insurance Department staff recognizes this problem, and certainly that is one of the reasons the HNY is so unpopular with businesses and their employees. It is not very good insurance.

Let’s fix that problem, rather than just make it easier to get inadequate insurance. Also, the state has a wonderfully effective and adequate insurance program in Family Health Plus that would be an excellent alternative to the flawed approach that is before you now.

Last year, the state opted to make FHP available to union plans and certain non-profits. We recommend that you make it available to small businesses as well.

The American Cancer Society recently co-sponsored a major survey of opinion about health insurance among small businesses in New York, along with Balcony and the Small Business Majority and the AARP. We found that only about half of businesses

were currently offering insurance, although most want to do so. Also, most feel that helping their employees with insurance is not only good business; it is part of their obligation. And a significant majority wanted to partner with government on a solution to this problem.

Let us work together toward a meaningful reform that helps businesses and individuals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Slocum", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Peter Slocum  
Vice President of Advocacy