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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
S 3257A (Duane) / A 8397A (Gottfried)
2009

AN ACT to amend the public health law and the social services law, in relation to prenatal care programs and services; and to repeal certain provisions of the public health law relating thereto.

This legislation is needed to make New York's prenatal care programs consistent with the new Ambulatory Patient Group (APG) payment methodology. The existing PCAP program offers health care providers an enhanced Medicaid rate to provide prenatal care to patients enrolled in the PCAP program. Under the new APG methodology, enhanced payments will no longer be available, and providers will be reimbursed based on the services provided. This change to APG payment methodology necessitates a change in law so providers can receive the reimbursement necessary to continue to participate in this program.

In a time of fiscal crisis, it is important to note that this is not a new program that will result in an increase in state spending. In fact, investing in prenatal care results in healthier births and mothers; factors that actually reduce the need to spend scarce state resources on costly complications that could be prevented through early prenatal care.

This legislation has been developed with the input of health care providers and advocates and is designed to ensure that the state's prenatal services to low-income women meet contemporary standards of care. The existing Prenatal Care Assistance Program (PCAP) standards are outdated and no longer reflect current medical standards of care. This legislation will update those standards so they reflect current best practices by requiring the DOH to consider generally accepted standards of care, including those standards issued by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The legislation is written to provide the DOH with the flexibility it needs to update standards as they change.

This bill will also expand access to prenatal services by expanding the numbers of health care providers who will be able to provide prenatal services to low-income women. Under the existing PCAP program, only designated providers were able to participate in the program. This legislation will allow any qualified provider who agrees to follow the standards of care to provide prenatal services to eligible women. By expanding the number of providers able to provide care, this bill helps to reduce the disparities in access often faced by low-income women.

Family Planning Advocates supports passage of this legislation.