



Southeast Queens in
Support of Health
Services (SQUISH)

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT for A4861/S5802-A

TO: Office of Counsel to the Governor
RE: A.4861/S.5802-A, The Hospital Closure Planning Act
DATE: October 1, 2009

Dear Governor Patterson:

Southeast Queens in Support of Health Services (SQUISH), a coalition of community-based organizations in Southeast Queens, joined by Community Board 12's Health Committee and sanctioned by its executive board, **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** the Hospital Closure Planning Act (A.4861/S.5802-A) and urges that it be signed into law. This Act requires that the Commissioner of Health hold a public hearing within 30 days of a proposed hospital closure on the impact a hospital closure would have on the area it serves.

As you know, the shuttering of both Mary Immaculate Hospital in Jamaica and St. John's Queens Hospital in Elmhurst earlier this year took place without community input and has placed huge strains on the health care infrastructure in Queens and on the community of Southeast Queens in particular. **This Act will provide affected communities facing future potential hospital closures notice and greater opportunity to be heard regarding the local effects of such closures.** As Senator Huntley, one of the sponsors of the Act, noted, the Hospital Closure Planning Act is essential because it gives stakeholders the ability to "assess whether to seek new services at a nearby hospital, or participate in efforts to preserve, improve or establish new health care services for the community."

For communities similar to Southeast Queens, which is racially and ethnically diverse as well as severely medically under-served, the Hospital Closure Planning Act is critical in ensuring that the community's voice is heard regarding the ramifications of such a closure. While this Act is just a first step in making sure that low-income communities of color most in need receive equal access to quality health care, it is an important one in that it recognizes the community's role in health planning.

Therefore, SQUISH urges you to sign A4861/S5802-A into law in order to protect all New Yorkers from the loss of health care services.

If you wish to discuss this legislation, please feel free to contact Eugenia Ruddman, 718.464.1024, Geniemar@aol.com; Linda Mitchell, 718.468.1136, Prinlsm@aol.com; or Kevin Forrester, 718.579.5019, Kforrester@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Southeast Queens in Support of Health Services (SQUISH)