



**TESTIMONY**

**OF**

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EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER**

**HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION/  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
OFFICE OF CITYWIDE HEALTH INSURANCE ACCESS**

**BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL  
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**OVERSIGHT – CONNECTING COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH HEALTH  
INSURANCE**

**Committee Room – City Hall  
February 27, 2007**

Good afternoon. I am Marjorie Cadogan, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration's Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (HRA/OCHIA). Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today about the important issue of encouraging college students and other young adults to access health insurance.

During the Bloomberg Administration, the City's targeted and intensive efforts to facilitate enrollment in health insurance caused significant decreases in the number of uninsured. Between Fiscal Year 2002 and Fiscal Year 2007 nearly 900,000 people have been enrolled in public health insurance, a growth of 35%.<sup>i</sup> As of November 2006, more than 2.5 million New York City residents are covered by public health insurance programs administered by HRA<sup>ii</sup> and as of February 2007 over 160,000 are enrolled in the State administered Child Health Plus program.<sup>iii</sup>

While the rest of New York State and the nation experienced decreases in health insurance coverage, New York City has experienced steady increases. According to the latest report from the United Hospital Fund, the number of uninsured adults in New York City declined from 1.41 million in 2002-2003 to 1.26 million in 2003-2004.<sup>iv</sup> Additionally, while employer sponsored health insurance has decreased in the rest of the State and across the country, New York City has experienced an increase in the proportion of adults insured through employer sponsored coverage from 50% in 2000-2001 to 51% in 2003-04.<sup>v</sup>

Despite the City's efforts to increase enrollment in public and affordable private health insurance programs, young adults still have high uninsurance rates. According to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's 2005 Community Health Survey, 26.9% -- 200,000 of New York City's

young adults aged 18 to 24 -- were uninsured.<sup>vi</sup> There are three main reasons for this – changes in private and public health insurance eligibility when young adults reach 19, the high cost of private health insurance coverage relative to income, and the failure of some young adults (even those who can afford it) to recognize the importance of health insurance.

When young adults reach 19 they are no longer eligible for public health insurance for children, which offers free or low-cost health insurance to those with incomes up to 250% of the federal poverty level (FPL). As adults, college-aged individuals can only access public health insurance if their income is at or below 150% of the FPL. For example, a student living alone without any children can obtain coverage through Family Health Plus if his or her monthly earnings are \$843 or below, which is 100% of the FPL. If the student has a child, he or she will be eligible for Family Health Plus if his or her monthly earnings are \$1,699 or below, which is 150% of the FPL, for a family size of 2. Medicaid income eligibility is even lower.

Young adults who have private health insurance through a parent's health insurance plan are covered from age 19 to 23 only if they are enrolled as full-time college students.<sup>vii</sup> Although some employers have different provisions, in general, part-time college students and other young adults are not covered by their parent's policy after they reach the age of 19.

It is important to note that approximately half of the colleges and universities in New York City mandate that their students have health insurance.<sup>viii</sup> If a college student is not covered by his or her parent's plan, health insurance costs are added to the price of tuition. Examples of New

York City based universities who mandate that college students have health insurance are The New School, Columbia, NYU, Long Island University, and Marymount Manhattan College.

Of those colleges and universities who do not mandate coverage, only the City University of New York (CUNY) has structured a special private insurance option for their full-time and part-time students, a GHI health insurance plan specifically designed for CUNY students taking at least 6 credit hours.<sup>ix</sup> The benefits and costs of the GHI/CUNY Student Health Insurance Program represent a more affordable option than coverage purchased on the individual market. Monthly premiums are approximately \$166 for single students and \$472 for families. When prescription drugs are included, the monthly premiums are approximately \$275 for single students and \$782 for families. As a comparison, the average monthly HMO premium rate in the individual private market is much higher at \$755 for an individual and \$2,233 for a family.<sup>x</sup>

Through our partnerships, first and foremost with CUNY, we are promoting Healthy NY, a New York State subsidized private health insurance program, as another more affordable option to address the health insurance needs of students who are aging off their parent's policy. Students 19 or older are eligible for Healthy NY at 250% of the FPL. They do not have to include their parents' income in their household income but, when applicable, they must include the income of a spouse with whom they reside. Healthy NY's requirement that someone be uninsured for a year before they can access its coverage is waived for students. Aging off a parent's policy is considered a qualifying exception. The average monthly premiums for Healthy NY, excluding cost-sharing and high-deductible plans, are \$238 for an individual and \$717 for a family.

Other affordable options available to New York City's college students include Brooklyn HealthWorks and Working Today. The monthly premiums for Brooklyn HealthWorks are \$205 for an individual and \$604 for a family. For Working Today, the monthly premiums are \$255 for an individual and \$759 for a family. The aforementioned costs exclude cost-sharing and high-deductible plans.

To address changes in eligibility, limited affordability options, and loss of coverage due to aging out of a parent's policy, the City employs several strategies to expand access to health insurance for college students and other young adults. These include internet-based tools as well as neighborhood outreach and enrollment.

Last Fall, the City launched ACCESS NYC which can be used by students as an internet-based tool to access multiple human service benefits for themselves and their families. Students can use the program at any time, from any location, and in seven different languages, putting information about health insurance and other benefits just a few clicks away. After completing the pre-screening process, students receive a list of the programs for which they are potentially eligible. They can print partially-populated application forms, search for office locations to apply for benefits, and create an account to access their information at a later time. Both the public health insurance and Healthy NY applications are available through ACCESS NYC. To apply for public health insurance programs, the student can visit a convenient neighborhood location where the application process will be fully explained by facilitated enrollers. After printing the Healthy NY application, students can mail it directly to the participating health plan of their choice.

HRA/OCHIA's consumer-friendly website (<http://www.nyc.gov/healthstat>) also helps students make informed health coverage choices. It features *A Smart Decision for College Students*, a guide to health insurance options. (I have brought copies of this decision making tool for you.) The site's on-line screening system allows students to find out which public or private options they qualify for. Additionally, they can learn about the low-cost and free care available to them until they are able to obtain health insurance coverage.

Special neighborhood-based efforts to facilitate enrollment in public health insurance programs occur through the City's HealthStat initiative, a city-wide collaboration of 14 City agencies, 16 managed care plans and a wide array of community- and faith-based organizations. Administered by HRA/OCHIA, the HealthStat partnerships provide outreach and facilitated enrollment for public health insurance in neighborhood-based venues such as schools, diverse places of worship, public housing developments and community events. CUNY's Office of Student Affairs is a vital HealthStat partner in connecting students to health insurance coverage and in providing administrators with the tools and resources for facilitated enrollment in its 18 campuses. Through our partnership, facilitated enrollers are available at freshman orientations, wellness and health fairs, AIDS awareness events, Healthy Heart Days and health related conferences.

OCHIA also contributes to forums about health insurance programs and the issues CUNY students face when accessing those programs. Examples include HRA/OCHIA's workshop entitled "Social and Health Services for Immigrant Students" and HRA/OCHIA's collaboration

with the CUNY/Daily News Citizenship Now! call-in program to address immigrant eligibility issues, including such subjects as public charge and sponsor liability.

We are committed to ensuring that college students and their parents are aware of and have access to health insurance options. Our partnership with CUNY provides important opportunities to realize that commitment. We also recognize that our ongoing efforts to enroll all those eligible for public health insurance programs and expand affordable options for individual workers and small businesses will address the important needs of college students and other young adults. This is in keeping with the Mayor's agenda to expand health insurance access. We look forward to working with the Council in pursuit of these initiatives.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify today about connecting college students to health insurance. I welcome any questions you may have at this time.

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<sup>i</sup> New York State Department of Health: Report on Number of Medicaid Eligibles by Category of Eligibility. New York State Department of Health: CHP-B Monthly Enrollment Reports. Analysis by HRA/OCHIA, using July 2001 – July 2006 date range.

<sup>ii</sup> Human Resources Administration's Office of Program Reporting, Analysis and Accountability HRA Facts Report. November 2006.

<sup>iii</sup> New York State Department of Health: CHP-B Monthly Enrollment Reports.

<sup>iv</sup> *Health Insurance Coverage in New York, 2003-2004*, United Hospital Fund, 2006.

<sup>v</sup> *Health Insurance Coverage in New York, 2003-2004*, United Hospital Fund, 2006.

<sup>vi</sup> Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 2005 Community Health Survey

<sup>vii</sup> New York State Insurance Law (section 3216) defines dependent children as "any children under a specified age which shall not exceed age nineteen except...any unmarried student at an accredited institution of learning may be considered a dependent child until attaining age twenty-three."

<sup>viii</sup> OCHIA estimate.

<sup>ix</sup> GHI CUNY plan – [http://www.ghi.com/members/plans/city/m\\_pl\\_city\\_cuny.html](http://www.ghi.com/members/plans/city/m_pl_city_cuny.html)

<sup>x</sup> OCHIA calculation – average of January 2007 individual market rates for Aetna, Atlantis, Cigna, Empire, GHI, HIP, HealthNet, HealthFirst, Oxford, and United. The average POS premium rate is even higher at \$1,080 per month for an individual and \$3,139 per month for a family.