



Retired Public Employees Association

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Representing the interests of 500,000 New York state and local government retirees

December 27, 2022

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12224

Re: Executive Budget

Dear Governor Hochul:

As you prepare your Executive Budget, the Retired Public Employees Association, representing the interests of 500,000 retired state and local government retirees, hopes that you will act favorably on an issue that affects retiree health insurance benefits administered by the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP). Namely, reduced coverage for access to skilled nursing facilities.

Medicare primary enrollees in the Empire Plan have significantly reduced access to skilled nursing facilities compared to active enrollees under the age of 65. As a matter of fact, NYSHIP provides no coverage at all, and retirees receive only a limited benefit through Medicare – 20 days of coverage, while active Empire Plan enrollees receive 120 days of coverage.

Efforts to correct this diminution of benefits administratively under the previous administration were not successful. Hence, a legislative remedy was sought, and the legislature unanimously passed S.8192/A.9215 to restore this benefit for Medicare primary enrollees in the Empire Plan.

That bill, along with eighteen others, was vetoed in Message 130 because it “did not include a funding source”. Now is the time to address the bill on its merits, and to remedy that objection by including funding authorization in your Executive Budget. The reality of the current situation is that the “funding source” is being borne 100% by retirees who are paying the same NYSHIP premium as active enrollees, yet are excluded from coverage because of one reason alone – their age.

We hope that you will act favorably upon this request, and RPEA remains ready to address any concerns that may arise.

Sincerely,

Edward C. Farrell
Executive Director