

May 7, 2008

The Honorable David A. Paterson
Governor of the State of New York
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

I am writing to request your urgent and critically needed support of two key health-related labor programs which benefit workers across New York State - the New York State Occupational Health Clinic Network and Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program.

Since the mid-1980s, New York State has been a leader in the field of occupational safety and health. The state-created and funded Occupational Health Clinic Network and Occupational Safety and Health Training Program are models for the rest of the country. These programs provide unique services:

- The 11 occupational medicine clinical centers and satellite facilities located throughout the state are dedicated to the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of occupational disease and injury of workers in all sectors of the economy.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program has provided high quality safety and health training to tens of thousands of working people – members of unions, safety and health organizations, and businesses -- about their rights to safe and healthful workplaces and helping them make informed decisions about how to deal with hazards faced on the job.

However, while the demand for these programs has consistently grown, inflation has hampered even the maintenance of previously existing service levels. Funding for the Occupational Safety and Health Training Program has not been increased for 17 years; similarly. Funding for New York State Occupational Clinic Network has not been increased for over a decade.

Pending legislation (S.6913-Maltese, A.4508-A, John) offers a mechanism for adjusting future funding for both these valuable programs by indexing their funding levels to the workers' compensation maximum weekly benefit level. We are also urging you to increase funding for these programs - an additional \$8 million for the Clinic Network and \$3 million for the Occupational Training Program. In consideration of the estimated \$1 billion in savings to employers resulting from recent changes in New York State's Workers' Compensation Law, we these requests to be modest and would have positive impact upon the public's health. Both of these programs provide employers with a better educated, more productive workforce, resulting in lower workers' compensation costs.

Since both programs receive their support from a very small assessment on workers' compensation premiums, both programs are off-budget and would not have an impact on the state's overall budget deficit.

We strongly urge your support for these model programs which benefit both working people and employers in our state. They represent good public health policy.

Thank you for your consideration.