

November 15, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor  
NYS State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Re: A.5587 (Wallace)/S.4858 (Hinchey)

Dear Governor Hochul,

LeadingAge New York and its not-for-profit, mission-driven aging services members write to you today in support of A.5587 (Wallace)/S.4858 (Hinchey), which would establish an Office of Hospice and Palliative Care Access and Quality within the Department of Health (DOH). New York State has consistently ranked 50th in the nation for Hospice Medicare utilization. The creation of this office, and a director to oversee it, is critical to improving hospice access and utilization in New York State.

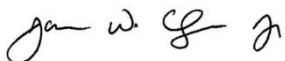
Hospice is a unique, multi-disciplinary health care service that is provided in a variety of settings. Hospice is frequently provided in tandem with other services such as nursing home, assisted living, and home care. It focuses on preventing, treating, and eliminating discomfort and pain related to physical, spiritual, and psychosocial distress and decline at the end of life. It also helps to address the needs of informal caregivers. As such, it is unlike other forms of health care, but it is integrated with many systems. Meanwhile, a lack of focused attention by policymakers and regulators on hospice access and utilization has led to the unintentional exclusion of hospice from critical policy initiatives during the pandemic and otherwise.

Dedicated representation within DOH is critical to making hospice a priority and ensuring that hospice providers, staff and consumers have the attention and inclusion they deserve when important state health care policies are developed. There are a variety of issues that impact access, including barriers and limitations in the NYS regulatory structure, reimbursement mechanisms, provider and patient education, and the disparity that exists in quality end-of-life care for historically underserved communities. It would be beneficial to have a dedicated resource at the Department to help address these complexities, to ensure that New Yorkers have full access to the services they want and are entitled to, particularly at the end of life.

Under this legislation, the new office and director would have the authority and jurisdiction to offer insight into all service lines as it relates to the impact on hospice programs, their patients and their employees. This would include offering “carve-outs”, exemptions, the inclusion in key state initiatives, and/or the creation of new beneficial programs that may include hospice or palliative care services.

The State must address underlying issues that present barriers to end-of-life care for all New Yorkers. Restoring and preserving health care rights of all New Yorkers with a life-limiting illness begins with an understanding of hospice services and attention at the DOH. For these reasons, LeadingAge NY supports A.5587 (Wallace)/S.4858 (Hinchey) and urges that it be adopted.

Sincerely,



James W. Clyne, Jr.  
President and CEO  
LeadingAge New York