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NYSCOP Statement on Governor Hochul's State of the State

While Governor Hochul includes many positive proposals in her "New York Dream," now is the time for her to be bold and take action to ensure all New Yorkers have access to quality, affordable health care.

NYSCOP applauds the Governor's proposals to expand access to free health care coverage for low-income seniors and families. Similarly, we support the Governor's efforts to recruit, retain, and build the health care workforce in a rational and sustainable manner. More, however, can and should be done to build on New York's success in reducing the ranks of the uninsured by building upon the existing public-private partnership.

While the creation of a new Medicaid Innovation Center to Lower Costs and Improve Care could address the important issue of the rising health care costs facing the State, her proposals do not address rising health care costs for New York families and businesses that pay for private health coverage – and may even drive additional, unnecessary costs. For example, NYSCOP believes the use of telehealth services should be encouraged where appropriate and reimbursement should be comparable when the services are comparable. But simply increasing payments for duplicate services or for services which are not equivalent to those provided in the office will only add to the cost of health care coverage without adding any real benefit.

In addition, we believe the Governor must do more to address one of the main drivers of health care costs – the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs. To make health care more affordable and accessible, she should address what is truly driving increases in drug costs: drug company profits and absence of pricing transparency.

Most importantly, while Governor Hochul's proposals continue to incrementally build on the progress New York has made over the last decade in reducing our uninsured rate to just 4.7%, NYSCOP believes that now is the time to be bold and address the barriers to health coverage for the single, largest group of uninsured New Yorkers – undocumented immigrants who make up nearly half of the State's remaining uninsured.

We strongly encourage Governor Hochul to build on our historic efforts by expanding eligibility to this group, who are unable to secure other publicly-supported coverage. This step, combined with her other proposals, would result in a true New York Dream – affordable, universal health coverage for all New Yorkers.

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The New York State Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans (NYSCOP) is a partnership of Rochester-based Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York and New York City-based Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield. Together, the health insurance plans provide comprehensive health coverage for millions of New Yorkers.

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