



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF  
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***Parties Must Prioritize Residents Over Reimbursements***

Kingston, NY (June 9, 2016) – Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach joins other regional leaders pushing for a prompt resolution to the contract dispute between Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield and the HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley. While a new agreement remains stalled as the previous one expired, diminishing options for local health care services have been imposed upon Ulster County residents.

“When the largest hospital and health facility in our immediate area has been forced to essentially shut its doors to thousands of our neighbors for non-emergencies, the welfare of the entire community is jeopardized,” said Auerbach. “Requiring Ulster County residents to drive upwards of an hour to Dutchess County or Albany for quality health care, pay greater out-of-pocket costs, or – even worse – forego treatment is unconscionable, plain and simple. My message to the parties as they continue their negotiations is clear: put patients ahead of profits, and do it now.”

Assemblyman Kevin A. Cahill (D – Ulster, Dutchess) and Senator George A. Amedore, Jr. (R, C, I – 46<sup>th</sup> Senate District) have sponsored a state proposal that would extend the expired agreement for an additional 90 days while Empire and HealthAlliance negotiated before a third-party mediator. The bill has passed the Assembly Insurance and Codes Committees, and it is expected to make its way to the floor for a vote before the end of the legislative session.

“I applaud Assemblyman Cahill and Senator Amedore for doing their part to hold the parties’ feet to the fire in quickly coming to a compromise,” said Auerbach. “With north of 2500 employees and their families as Empire members, the burden placed on the County workforce alone speaks to the magnitude of the situation. Empire and HealthAlliance must overcome their differences as soon as possible so that our residents receive the health care they need – exactly when and in the community where they need it.”

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