

# 1199SEIU Prez George Gresham & union members will risk arrest to protest healthcare cuts in Gov. Hochul's budget

*A New Orleans'-style funeral march to Gov. Hochul's office will be followed by non-violent civil disobedience to draw attention to the impact of healthcare cuts*

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, March 29, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- WHEN/WHERE: The march towards the Governor's office will begin at 4:15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 29 at 1199SEIU's HQ (498 7th Ave in Manhattan). A non-violent civil disobedience action will take place around 5:30 p.m. outside the Governor's office at 633 3rd Avenue

## WHAT:

Hundreds of 1199SEIU healthcare workers and community supporters will hold a funeral procession through the streets of New York City. Mourners, dressed in black and carrying coffins and tombstones, will be accompanied by a brass band in the style of a New Orleans second-line funeral.

Then, a group of 1199SEIU members and allies, led by 1199SEIU President George Gresham, will engage in an act of non-violent civil disobedience in the street in front of the Governor's office, holding tombstones illustrating what will happen if New York doesn't invest in healthcare in the SFY 2024 budget.

"In the spirit of Dr. King, who recognized that injustice in healthcare is the most 'shocking and inhumane' form of inequality, we are prepared to put our bodies on the line to protect access to health care in New York," said 1199SEIU President George Gresham. "Cutting funding to safety-net hospitals, reducing wages of low-income homecare workers, and failing to close the Medicaid coverage gap would be disastrous for our healthcare system, still reeling from three years of the pandemic. We need Gov. Hochul to recognize the gravity of New York's healthcare crisis and the life-and-death issues at stake."

## WHY:

The event comes a week after some 15,000 members of 1199SEIU held the largest healthcare rally in decades at the Capitol in Albany on 3/21, calling attention to the severe impact that Gov. Hochul's proposed budget would have on access to healthcare in New York's most vulnerable communities. Three years to the month that the first COVID case was confirmed in New York, patients and workers continue to face the pandemic's aftershocks. Safety-net hospitals are on

the brink of closure, emergency rooms are overflowing, nursing home residents face interminably long wait times for bedside care, and homecare services are becoming ever harder to come by.

Gov. Hochul's proposed budget utterly fails to grasp the gravity of this crisis. Rather than making the necessary investments to stabilize healthcare services, the proposed 5% Medicaid rate increase is entirely offset by the elimination of savings from the 340b drug pricing program and the cut to the Indigent Care Pool. The budget includes cuts of \$700 million from safety net hospitals, reverses course on a major victory last year raising the pay of homecare workers to \$3 above the minimum wage, reduces wages for consumer-directed home health aides by \$4.09/hr., and fails to provide adequate funding increases to nursing homes as they struggle to recruit and retain staff to comply with nursing home reform laws.

With stagnating Medicaid funding and a depleted and burnt-out workforce, an austere healthcare budget would be devastating to New Yorkers, especially seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income families. 1199SEIU is calling on NY's elected leaders to invest \$2.5 billion in healthcare in the FY2024 budget, including the following:

(The one-house budget proposals recently released by Speaker Carl Heastie and Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins make many of these commitments, and they must be fulfilled in the final budget.)

- Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates by 10% for hospitals and 20% for nursing homes, with no offsets.
- Restore the \$700 million in safety-net funding, and increase it by an additional \$600 million.
- Address the disparity in reimbursement rates in upstate New York, which are approximately 20% lower than downstate.
- Preserve the investment made last year in Fair Pay for Home Care to stabilize the homecare workforce and undo the drastic proposed cuts to wages for workers employed through the consumer-directed program.
- Raise the minimum wage to \$21.25 by 2027, followed by indexing.

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1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East is the largest and fastest-growing healthcare union in America. We represent over 450,000 nurses and caregivers throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Florida. Our mission is to achieve quality care and good jobs for all.

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