

Post-Standard Letter

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Grants keep promise of health-care reform

To the Editor:

Gov. David Paterson recently announced a \$100 million investment in one-time grants to strengthen and expand New York state's primary care infrastructure through its HEAL 6 program. This is an essential step in assuring that every New Yorker has access to cost-effective care.

The state gave Central New York nearly \$16 million, including more than \$1.8 million to the Syracuse Community Health Center for a school-based health center program.

Last year, the governor and the Legislature made a four-year commitment to reform primary care reimbursement and address the provider shortage across New York. This commitment will come under enormous pressure as the state copes with budget shortfalls in the years to come.

Yet never has such investment been more urgent or timely. The availability of such care is the only strategy to control the burgeoning cost of health care (driven by avoidable chronic illness and reliance on emergency room and hospital use), meet the health care needs of newly unemployed and uninsured New Yorkers, and still improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities.

In the year ahead, the governor and the Legislature must keep the commitment. The question is not whether we afford to make this investment, but whether we can afford not to.

Linda A. Lambert, executive director , New York Chapter, American College of Physicians,
founding member, Primary Care Coalition