

HEALTH AND SERVICES COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Verbatim Minutes

A regular meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Thursday, April 21, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.

Members Present:

Legislator Kate Browning- Chair
Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher - Vice Chair
Legislator Jack Eddington
Legislator John Kennedy
Legislator Sarah Anker

Also In Attendance:

Legislator Tom Muratore - District No. 4
Legislator Lynne Nowick - District No. 13
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson - Office of Counsel to the Legislature
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk, Suffolk County Legislature
Paul Perillie - Aide to Majority Caucus.
Kara Hahn - Director of Communications for Presiding Officer Lindsay
Michael Pitcher - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Marge Acevedo - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Kellianne Sacchitello - Aide to Legislator Muratore
Kevin LaValle - Aide to Legislator Muratore
Ali Nazir - Aide to Legislator Kennedy
Christina DeLisi - Aide to Legislator Schneiderman
Craig Freas - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Diane Dono - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Eric Kopp - Chief Deputy County Executive
Dr. James Tomarken - Commissioner/SC Department of Health Services
Gregg Blass - Commissioner/SC Department of Social Services
Ed Hernandez - Deputy Commissioner/SC Department of Social Services
Linda O'Donohoe - Assistant to the Commissioner/Dept of Social Services
Dot Kerrigan - 3rd Vice-President/AME
Nicole Christian-Goodine - President/Greater Gordon Heights
Chamber of Commerce
Arthenia Sealy-James - President/Greater Gordon Heights
Civic Association
Pamela Mizzi - The Prevention Resource.
Allison Galasso - Program Director/HUGS, Inc.
(Human Understanding in Growth Seminars)
Patricia Brodhagen - Food Industry Alliance
Kevin Beyer - Long Island Gasoline Retailers Association
Jessica Pentecost - Outreach
All Other Interested Parties

***(*The following people were here in opposition to
The closing of the Elsie Owens Coram Health Center***

Roberta Owens - Elsie Owens Coram Health Center.
John Mahon - Advisory Council/Elsie Owens Coram Health Center
Nicole Christian-Goodine - President/Greater Gordon Heights Chamber of Commerce
Arthenia Sealy-James - President/Greater Gordon Heights Civic Association
Joy Nebel - Patient/Elsie Owens Coram Health Center
MaryAnn Sherlo - Concerned Citizen
Kenneth Feldman - Health Care Administrator
Carlos Speight - Present/CSEA Local 614/Stony Brook
Debbie Nappi-Gonzalez - Executive Vice-President/CSEA Local 614
Jimmy McPherson - CSEA Local 614.
Marvin Colson - Chemical Associate Professor/School of Social Welfare , Stony Brook University
Mary Finnin - Health Center Advisory Council
Edna Randall - Resident of Coram
Toneisha Colson, Beverly Colson, Justin Colson,
Aliyah Brown & Jonathan Brown - All from Faith Baptist Church, Coram

Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney - Court Reporter

Verbatim Transcript Prepared By:

Alison Mahoney & Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

(The meeting was called to order at 2:12 P.M.)

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I think we're ready to go. We will start our Health and Human Services Committee meeting. Would everyone please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance led by our new Legislator. Legislator Anker.

Salutation

I would like to say welcome to Legislator Sarah Anker. She will be joining our Health Committee. She is now a member on the Health Committee, and welcome. It's going to be a pleasure working with you.

We will start with our presentation. We have a presentation by New York's Assistant Regional Director, Ronald Barz of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, and you're going to be discussing the program's services for Suffolk County's volunteers. So Ron, if you would like to go ahead and begin.

MR. BARZ:

Madam Chairman, I'll turn the microphone over to the Regional Director, Mr. Tony Cruz; he'll explain the organization, then I will explain the services we do have for Suffolk County.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Can you make sure you have the button and you'll see the light so that we'll hear you.

MR. CRUZ:

First of all, Madam Chairman and County Legislators, I would like to thank you for the opportunity today to talk about the Firefighters Cancer Support Network.

Over eight years ago, the Firefighters Cancer Support Network was formulated by a firefighter in LA County Fire Department and his name is Mike DeBraun. He was a cancer survivor of colon cancer and at the time that he was diagnosed, he didn't have anybody to talk to in the fire service. As a result of that, he went to his battalion chief and spoke with him and asked if he could start a mentoring and support group, and the Chief gave him the green light to do so. As I said earlier, this occurred over eight years ago. We are currently in all 50 states and also in seven other countries.

The New York Chapter of this national organization was formulated now about five years here in New York State. What we do is we mentor and give support to fire fighters, EMS providers and their families in a timely fashion when they're diagnosed with cancer. We are contacted by the individuals, we set them up with mentors, people who are also cancer survivors. I'm a cancer survivor, my partner here, Ron Barz, is a cancer survivor, so we kind of understand what you go through when you've been diagnosed with cancer. We also have what we call caregivers, someone who had a member of their family that went through a battle with cancer, and they come from a different approach on this situation where they teach people how to understand and be compassionate to others in reference to going through cancer.

We talk about education and prevention. We try to educate fire fighters and EMS providers to not -- when they're in fires, to wear their SCBA's, because of the smoke that we're taking in. We talk to fire fighters about not wearing your bunker gear in your living areas, in the kitchen, because we contaminate those areas with the particulates that are on our bunker gear. We talk about even putting bunker gear in the trunk of your car. And why we say the trunk of your car is that you throw it in there and you take it out, the wife says to you, "I'm going to go grocery shopping," she takes the car and where does she put the groceries? She puts them in the trunk of the car; now you contaminated the family's food. We also talk about not washing our bunker gear any more at home; we're all guilty of that; now you cross-contaminated your home clothing machine.

We talk about prevention. We tell fire fighters, EMS providers and their families to get your physicals every year. If you notice that something is taking place and you're losing weight or something is not right about your health, to get it checked out. Always go for screenings for different types of cancers that are attacking the fire fighters and EMS providers and their families at this time. As I said earlier, we try to give timely mentoring and support to only fire fighters and EMS providers.

At this time, I will turn it over to Mr. Barz and he'll talk about some of the activities the New York Chapter is going through and some of the support services that we have.

MR. BARZ:

Good afternoon, Madam Chairman. Tony didn't mention before that Tony is retired FDNY and I've been in the volunteer service in Suffolk County for 36 years. And if some of you do recognize me, I serve on the Fire Academy Extension Board as one of the directors.

What we have done in Suffolk County is we realize a lot of fire fighters and people within Suffolk County do not have money for insurance anymore. The problem comes up with the high cost of living going on in Suffolk County, that it's either heat the house, put food on the table or skip your medical. Through our researches, we have found different organizations, different hospitals that offer services. As for instance on the handout for Suffolk County, services provided; breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening for the East End of Suffolk County would be in Central-Suffolk Hospital and Peconic Bay; in Western Suffolk County it is Good Samaritan Hospital; these are the three services they offer as of free-of-charge. Legal and supportive of services are also available through Nassau County Law Services Committee, as stated on the handout. And for ovarian cancer, they have a research group in Suffolk -- I'm sorry, in Stony Brook University Hospital which Tony and I serve on their advisory board for the cancer group.

On the next page we have Stony Brook University Hospital. A great lady is Linda Billy, Supervisor of Patient Satisfaction. The best part for her is we use her on the first three parts because we are on the advisory board. We do have a mentoring program that we put our fire fighters, EMS personnel and their families through when we mentor them through their cancers. But she is greatly known for patient advocate and community outreach, which is something that could be very well used right now, again, with the economy that we have.

The American Cancer Society right here in Hauppauge, Sylvia Diaz, has been a great support for us. As you see, they offer services for transportation in Suffolk County, regional service for referrals and other cancer care services; and Marie Ellen Lee is also affiliated with that.

Somebody had asked us for a young child that wanted to go to Disney World. We started reaching around, we found {Joanne McGoveran} over here in Commack Loop in Ronkonkoma for Make-a-Wish Foundation; we have used them already.

The American Cancer Society, Hope Lodge; why I put this in here for, we do have people that have to go into New York City for cancer treatments. Through Ms. Diaz, we found a facility in there that they can be in there within eleven days if they have to go back and forth for treatments, to Sloan Kettering or any other hospital in there. It is a class five hotel type situation. They have to go through the referrals through the social worker in the hospital. We have two people in there right now who have been referred to them, because a young gentleman has to go in for chemo for ten days; instead of traveling back and forth to Suffolk County, he can stay in New York City and go back and forth.

Prescription Discount Club. Something was just started about a month ago and one of the Chiefs from the local fire department gave it to us. What this is, it's not a prescription card, it's a discount card for drugs. What this will give you in actual services is about 15% off of brand name and almost 50% off on a generic name. These are for people that do not have any Rx program or for senior citizens who fall into the category of the donut whole when you get into the Medicare Program. These cards are available. It does save you a few dollars, but instead of paying \$100, you might pay \$70 or \$75; it's still better in your pocket.

The last one we have on this list is Strength For Life, it's a group of women who are volunteers who are certified in wellness. What they generally work with are women who have had breast cancer or other types of cancers. As we know, most women, after they have breast cancer or have a mastectomy, they cannot move themselves, they cannot brush their teeth, they cannot do a lot of things. Through the Cancer Society, through the West Islip Coalition For Breast Cancer and the One-in-Nine Foundation, we have gotten WICS for them, toothbrushes, and through this Strength For Life, are able to go back and exercise to get their quality of life back to where it was before.

These are things we do do. There are numerous other ones we have throughout the State of New York, but these I specifically put out for Suffolk County. If you have any questions, we're free to answer right now for you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Ron. You know, I'm just curious, you say you're a retired New York City Firemen. I know that a lot of our volunteers --

MR. BARZ:

No, Tony is.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Yeah. A lot of our volunteers are New York City Firemen also. I have a lot of them in my district and they do it in the city and then they come back home and they volunteer. You know, I know

that there's the 9/11 registry that they're all signed up on also. I mean, are you seeing any of them experiencing health problems post 9/11?

MR. CRUZ:

Well, currently there's -- unofficially, I've heard about 600 fire fighters who have been diagnosed with cancer since 9/11; there's a lot of issues that are attached to that. Yes, we've mentored many fire fighters who have come down with cancer since that time. Some are still in a battle with their cancer and some have lost their battle with cancer. So yes, there are victims from that day.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I was curious, because I know that we do have a lot of them and I was just curious what the numbers were. And obviously through, you know, the 9/11 registry they can get assistance also. Does anyone have any questions? Anyone have questions?

LEG. EDDINGTON:

I do.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Legislator Eddington.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

I just actually want to just thank you for stepping up to take care of our volunteers who are our real heroes, so I thank you very much. As a cancer survivor myself, thank you.

MR. BARZ:

Thank you.

MR. CRUZ:

Thank you, once again. You know, Ron yells at me all the time because I don't talk about my background and everything else. But one thing Ron and I do agree upon, it's not just about us, it's about all fire fighters, EMS providers and their families and educating them.

And with that being said, we do hold quarterly meetings. The next meeting of the Cancer Network will take place on April 27th which is a Wednesday evening, 7:30 at the Hicksville Fire Department. And again, at our meetings we try to educate. This -- the past meetings we have spoken about esophageal cancer, pancreatic cancer, so we try to do an educational part of our meeting as well as the general business.

So we have that meeting open to whoever.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Now, do you go to -- you know, when the guys go through the academy for their training, the volunteers, do you start at the academy and train them there or talk to them there and can they do follow ups?

MR. BARZ:

As of talking with the Executive Director and since I sit on the board, and we've just been approached by New York City, Nassau County, Westchester and the City of Yonkers to come in and talk to their probie classes about cancer with fire fighters. Yes, it will be being done probably in the next class before September again to talk with fire fighters again about the dangers of fire fighting. When we came in, you didn't wear an SCBA. You weren't a man unless you went into the fire without something on your face, you had to run in. Now it's you're not dealing with wood, you're not dealing with wool or carbon, now you're dealing with hydrocarbons which will kill you, and that's what we're finding out right now. Fire fighters are coming down with very rare cases of cancer; not so much as we used to have as lung cancer. Thyroid cancer, pancreatic cancer, colon cancer,

kidney cancer, brain cancer; these are the cancers we're facing, not lung cancer anymore.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

And I think, too, that sometimes you go and then they go to the academy and, you know, you're filling them up with so much information that they forget a lot of what they were told. So I think it's important to make sure that you keep reminding them and refreshers and don't forget, you know. Because I can tell you, my husband was a 9/11 responder, the first few days he was there, there was no masks.

MR. CRUZ:

No.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

"You'll be fine", but they're not.

MR. BARZ:

Well, both of us were there, I came down with double pneumonia a month and a half later. I never had bronchitis or nothing my entire life; I had double pneumonia, knocked me on my back for five months.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

So I appreciate everything that you guys are doing. Our volunteers need to be cared for and be well informed, so I appreciate it.

Any other questions? No? Thank you.

MR. BARZ:

Thank you.

MR. CRUZ:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Is Paul Pactor in the room and John King? Do we have Paul Pactor and John King in the room?

UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Paul wasn't able to make it, I work with Long Island Cares also.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

We actually have to have --

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

I'll call him.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

We need them here.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

I guess there was a miscommunication, but the Chair usually invites people who are appointees to come so that we can speak with them directly. Okay? So we'll be in touch with Paul to come for that Food Policy Council appointment, okay? Thank you.

UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay, we'll start with our Public Portion, and the first speaker is Marvin Colson.

MR. COLSON:

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and Members of the Legislature. My name is Marvin Colson, I'm a Chemical Associate Professor at the School of Social Welfare, Stony Brook University. And I'm here on behalf of our school and {Dr. Visvane} in relationship to the consideration of the possible defunding of the Elsie Owens Coram Health Center.

In addition to that, I have the distinct pleasure of being the first Administrative Director of the Elsie Owens Coram Health Center upon its inception. And looking amongst the board today, to emphasize that years ago we wanted to thank the Legislature for their forethoughts and their forward thinking in recognizing the need for primary health care services for the community of the North Central/Brookhaven area. And for years, Suffolk County has been a fore runner and nationally recognized and it services four primary care services in Suffolk County and for citizens, and questioning now the possible consideration of defunding that program.

As you very well know, back in 1998, this same body had passed legislation to rename the Coram Health Center the Elsie Owens Health Care Center. And we implore you to look upon yourselves and the compassion and the legislation ability not to decrease or stop the funding for that program. We thank you very much.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Let's see, next we have Nicole Christian?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Grodine.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Grodine? Thank you.

MS. CHRISTIAN-GRODINE:

Good afternoon. I forgot, you would think I didn't work here, right? Good afternoon. My name is Nicole Christian-Grodine, I am the President of the Greater Gordon Heights Chamber of Commerce and I am here representing our full membership and the business community of Gordon Heights. We are deeply concerned about this possible closure of the Elsie Owens North Brookhaven Health Center in Gordon Heights.

The area where the center is located is -- has been designated as our downtown through our visioning process. We are very concerned about the possible defunding, not only because of the effect on the quality of life for individuals that depend on the center, but also because we do not need a blighted structure on our main Street. Stony Brook University as well as the staff at the center have been good neighbors to our business community, we consider them partners in our future as far as what we're trying to do with the visioning. We definitely want this committee and the Legislature itself to be very mindful about what they are doing when they are looking to cut costs.

This area has been targeted for revitalization and our question is if the center is defunded, what would be put there; a blighted space, a drug rehab center? I've heard some crazy things and I will let you know that the business community is vigilant and we are going to be watching this process very closely because we do not want to see Gordon Heights turn into a slum. We do not want to see people in our community have no place to go for health care services and other quality of life issues. The center is a vital component of the overall development and life of our community.

So as President of the Greater Gordon Heights Chamber of Commerce and as a community organizer for Brookhaven Residents in Control, we implore this committee to stop all processes in looking at defunding the health center. Thank you very much for your time.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you, Nicole.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Nicole. Next is Joy Nebe? Nebe? I may have said it wrong. Did I say your name right?

MS. NEBEL:

Joy Nebel.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Nebel. Okay, I'm sorry.

MS. NEBEL:

My name is Joy Nebel, I'm a resident in Ronkonkoma, New York. I lived in Smithtown for 25 years. For the 15 years I've been going to the Elsie Owens Health Center in Coram for my medical care. I have no insurance, my husband works. My name 19-year old daughter was on Child Health Plus, that's canceled once they turn 19. My kids got Child Health Plus, we paid all the time for it, they turn 19, they take that away. The guidelines are different for Family Health Plus, they're not eligible for that. They cannot apply for Medicaid until they're 21. We cannot get Medicaid because we make too much money, according to the State guidelines. I can't afford private insurance and we go the Elsie Owens as self-pay people there.

If they close or take over something else, I hear now that they might stay open but they're only going to take insured or Medicaid people. So I want to know where I'm supposed to go for health care, my husband and my daughter while she's a full-time college student with no insurance. So that's something they need to consider before closing down a center like that.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

If you want to hold on a minute, we have a question for you. Sorry, Joy.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Joy, thank you for coming and speaking.

MS. NEBEL:

Questions?

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, no. I just want to support, you know, what you're saying. You know, you're hard working people who are falling between the cracks here.

MS. NEBEL:

Right.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

And we are going to do everything we can to keep that health center operational for people in the area. I just wanted to ask about your daughter. Sometimes at the colleges, if the parents don't have insurance there is a discounted student insurance health insurance plan?

MS. NEBEL:

Right.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

So I was just wondering if you talked to your college about that.

MS. NEBEL:

My son attends Stony Brook University, he got student health insurance when he goes there, they offer it. Unfortunately, the copays are \$35 a visit and you have to lay out any prescription money and then they reimburse you within 30 to 60 days. My son just needed a prescription for \$600 that I had to lay out. Of course, like I said, in the past three years my husband's made about 20 to \$25,000 less than he was making three years ago which was a bad enough struggle.

He -- unfortunately, Coram does not take the health insurance he has, so he can't go there so now we're back to his pediatrician paying \$35 a visit. He also has Chronic Asthma. So his health insurance through the University isn't helping much, he was better off being self-pay at Coram.

My younger daughter, she's 19, she attends Suffolk County Community College and they go, again, by our income and we make too much money to get her on that. My older daughter has graduated Stony Brook, she's a Biology teacher, developmental genetics and she has health insurance and she still goes to Coram because it's such good care. You know, they have everything there, everything you need. Women's Health Partnership, Men's Care After 50, you know, all that stuff there, and still goes there and she can go to any doctor she wants to.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. Thank you, Joy.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Joy, you know, your story is exactly one of the stories. This is why we have our health centers, is because the people who fall through the cracks. You're working hard, you've raised two great kids.

MS. NEBEL:

Three.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Three, sorry, and, you know, that's what our health center is there for. But Legislator Eddington would like to say a few things.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

I just want to reassure you that, you know, I happen to have known Elsie Owens and I went to the School of Social Welfare. She should probably be nominated for a Saint.

MS. NEBEL:

I agree with that.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

But somehow, somehow in Suffolk County in the last six to eight months you see people that we respect and honor, they're closing the buildings with these people's names on it.

MS. NEBEL:

Thank you, that's what I also said; they're disrespecting her hard work.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

And I can tell you that every single year the members of this committee and the Legislature puts hundreds of thousands of dollars back in the budget to maintain them. This is -- we're hearing it this year because it's out front, but every year we have fought to keep those buildings open. And you want to make calls, certainly come here, but there's another place in Hauppauge that you need to get the message to, because we are for health care for everybody in Suffolk County.

MS. NEBEL:

Right.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

So we will continue the fight in this committee and in the Legislature for you.

MS. NEBEL:

I appreciate that, and so does everybody else who has to work and pay for this.

At one point, like I said, my kids were always on Child Health Plus. Because their guidelines are so slim, the one year my husband made \$280 too much, so they were not entitled to the Child Health Plus. That was the year my son in 5th grade had his appendix taken out; it cost us \$9,000 to the hospital, which of course was a bill that couldn't get paid. But that's why they need this kind of health care for us, there's no way I'm going to get my own health care anywhere else.

And like the other woman was saying, why would they close such a good place? It's a busy place, it's kept up, otherwise what's going to happen to it? Become vacant like the stores that are going on now in Smithtown, everything getting vacant and closed down? But the main concern is keep everybody going there, self-pay and people with insurance, because it's a very scary thing to be getting older and not have health insurance. My husband is not a well man, he's sickly, and if it wasn't for them, years ago they sent him for a program, for a colonoscopy and they found cancerous polyps, all through their programs, otherwise he wouldn't be alive right now, and that would be a bigger burden on the community than him working. He's able to work and everything goes as it's going. Thank you.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you, Joy.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Joy. Next is Allison Galasso.

MS. GALASSO:

Good afternoon. My name is Allison Galasso and I am the Program Director for Human Understanding & Growth Seminars, HUGS, a drug and alcohol prevention program that is dedicated to keeping the youth of Suffolk County substance-free.

HUGS has been serving the youth of Suffolk County for 30 years and has positively influenced the lives of over 13,000 adolescents to date. I am before you today to urge you all to support both IR 2156 and IR 2210. The members of the Suffolk County Legislature have a history for being proactive when it comes to the health and well-being of its constituents. As a resident of Suffolk County, a parent of two children and an advocate for healthy youth, I am asking you to continue your commitment to vibrant, healthy individuals and families and push this proposed legislation out of committee and bring it to the forefront of your agendas.

As a parent who works in the prevention field, I am educated about the negative side effects of energy drinks. Many parents, including friends of mine, have no idea of the potential dangers lurking inside those cans. Kids believe it is okay to consume energy drinks to get that buzzed feeling; after all, they're not drinking alcohol.

We are painfully aware of the deadly consequences of substance use among the youth of Suffolk County. Getting buzzed off a few energy drinks at 15-years old might seem innocent enough for some, yet we in the field know for many the behavior of using any substance to create a desired feeling is a prelude to a future life of addiction. The use of energy drinks has a low perceived risk and coupled with the widespread availability of these products, it creates a dangerous combination for our pre-teens and teens.

There are no health benefits to adolescents consuming energy drinks; in fact, they may be extremely harmful due to the high levels of caffeine, sugar and other supplements. Help keep youth of Suffolk County healthy, just as you did with legislation removing products containing DxM from store shelves. DxM legislation was pushed through with the intention of the Legislature to educate the public, parents and teachers as to the dangers of that particular product. DxM legislation was pushed through with a unanimous vote by the Legislature. Why? Because you care about the health and well-being of young people of Suffolk County. Do the same here with energy drinks. This is about health, not the revenue to be lost by retailers and distributors.

This proposed legislation is not about tax revenue, it is not about sales, it is about creating a healthy environment for our young people. Continue to serve the people of Suffolk County as you have in the past. Protect us and our young people. Pass both IR 2156 and IR 2210. I thank you for your time and your commitment to healthy youth.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. Next is John Mahon?

MR. MAHON:

Good afternoon. My name is John Mahon and I am on the Advisory Council at the Elsie Owens Health Care Center. And it's great to hear that everybody seems to be in support of not closing the health care center, but I'm sure that you can appreciate that it's very frustrating for us in the community and especially for the patients that are somewhat in limbo, whether it's being closed or not.

I actually worked with Mrs. Owens on the location of the health care center, and everyone who was on that committee did not want it in that location; it has turned out great. It's a beautiful building. But we went to so many meetings and we were heard and everything, but, you know, when it came down to it, we didn't know whose decision it was, we were just told, "Listen, you know, this is where it's going to be."

So the concern of the community is that somebody is going to make a decision, okay. And again, it's great to have the support of the committee, but somebody is going to make a decision whether it's going to be open or closed. And I'm sorry, I just have a brief statement.

The Elsie Owens Health Care Center had approximately 33,000 visits in 2010, with patients coming from a broad area of Brookhaven. The health center not only serves the medical needs, but many other services including food and clothing donated by the community. It truly is a community effort that helps these patients out.

Many of these patients are parents with small children and receive excellent care at the health care center. Many patients do not have transportation. So we're all wondering, where would these patients go? Obviously the emergency room at Stony Brook Hospital would not be a viable option,

an additional burden to the taxpayers. And again, what the community is asking, if this is even being considered, where would these patients go?

Yes, you know, we understand that these are very difficult times. We're all willing to share in the cutbacks, but we don't understand why the burden is being handed down to the less fortunate and those being -- you know, that are being served at the Elsie Owens Health Care center. And that is it. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Mr. Mahon, I would recommend, I know the Presiding Officer has crafted a letter asking Legislators to sign on to it. Because one of the problems is the State cuts and, you know, Article 6 cuts of \$20 million and where we're going to find that money is a problem.

I would highly recommend, I know there's a lot of you here today to speak on the health center, and I'm glad that you're here because it shows the importance of keeping it running and keeping it open. But I highly recommend that each and every one of you contact your State representatives and say, "We can't afford this. It's really, really hurting us." We want to keep the health center open, I want to keep the health center open, but we do have a major problem here with the \$20 million loss. So I will -- we'll continue with speakers, but please, don't stop here, go to the State.

MR. MAHON:

And we will continue to do that, but -- I'm sorry. But one of the things that's confusing is why those cuts wouldn't be shared by everyone. You know, why take, you know, one center and a very important center right smack in the middle of Brookhaven and take the money from there?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Well, it's not the only one. And I think when everybody is done speaking, I think maybe we can have BRO explain, maybe if you guys can explain it a little better than some of us. But we'll certainly have an explanation for you when we're done with the speakers.

MR. MAHON:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. Mary Ann Sherlo?

MS. SHERLO:

Good afternoon. My name is Mary Ann Sherlo, I'm a concerned citizen. I became disabled 15 years ago, and since then I've been -- I was asked by people in the Hispanic community if I would bring them to get medical treatment. I started taking them to health centers; I've been doing that for 15 years to the Coram Health Center. They know me very well over there.

During that time -- a lot of the people that I do take are undocumented people, day laborers and their families. I assist them in obtaining the many services that are offered at the health center. To think that these people can go and utilize, you know, the emergency room when the health centers are closed is ludicrous because they can't afford three, \$4,000. You know, a couple of Tylenol are about 60 bucks. You know, and it's not just -- I'm sorry. It's not just the undocumented, but it's the documented, it's the poor, it's the elderly, it's the uninsured and it's the under-insured that are going to lose out if this Coram Health Center is not kept open, that's all I have to say.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, and thank you for all your work.

MS. SPERLO:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Kenneth Feldman.

MR. FELDMAN:

Madam Chair, good afternoon. My name is Kenneth Feldman. I live in Stony Brook. I've been a Health Care Administrator in this County for 25 years and a Dean of a local college. I'm here to support the Elsie Owens Health Center because health care is local. I do understand the fiscal climate of this country, whether it be fiscal or the Federal Level or the State level or local. But the constituents affected for the closing and defunding of the Elsie Owens Health Center are local constituents to the members of this committee.

Brookhaven Town, as we understand now, has been identified as the fastest growing township in New York State. 2010 produced the largest increase in the uninsured, the census tracking has been used. Thirty-six percent of the population increasing daily are uninsured working poor within this County. There has been no increase in funding in the health centers over the past five years, despite the cost of doing business within the health centers. The care is local. If the Elsie Owens is unfunded or defunded, the care of the 33,000 constituents for those centers will go elsewhere. If you look at the care rendered at the local emergency department, in my care I've been an ED administrator and if we're going to push for 33,000 visits for the local emergency departments, it's unconscionable. It will affect the care of the rest of the community, it will affect the quality of care.

The standard of care in this country is continuity of care. Elsie Owens Health Center is superlative, their medical, nursing and support staff offers superlative, continuing quality of care. The continuity of care offered there in cradle-to-grave, from generation to generation, has been stellar. The care offered at the emergency departments unfortunately do not have that ability, so the standard of care will dramatically decrease within this County as well as the North Brookhaven care as well.

Currently, expenses are not the issue at Elsie Owens, it is revenue. So I implore the committee and the Legislature to find what has to be done to offer the appropriate care to the constituents of this County, because the effect of defunding it far, far impacts more than the 33,000 visits offered last year at Elsie Owens, it impacts the rest of Suffolk County. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Mr. Feldman, Legislator Viloría-Fisher has a question.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

I'm going to pick on you since you're my constituent. But, you know, you hit so many of the right points and you know as the administrator of an ED how expensive that is. That's a very expensive alternative and it's really not the best way to provide services for people in any continuity, in any kind of continuity of service. And as you were talking about -- I thought about what you were saying regarding our constituencies and what the speaker before you said. And I'm wondering why -- you know, she said that she brings a number of undocumented people to the centers. And if we're targeting centers because they provide services for undocumented people, I wouldn't be surprised by that because of the person who is the chief financial officer of this County and how he has targeted the undocumented workers. And the excuse will be that they don't pay taxes, and in fact they pay the taxes that keeps Suffolk County afloat which is our sales tax, because everything that they buy, that we all buy is what our budget is based on.

So I thank you for coming down because, you know, the hospitals are also suffering. I know the kind of cuts that Stony Brook University is suffering. Even though the budget filled in some of those shortfalls, it's still squeaking through and it's a tremendous burden for the hospital emergency rooms to have to provide that primary care for individuals, because it's not the best way to provide medical care.

MR. FELDMAN:

I agree, thank you. Because the concern is the ED's aren't set up to even offer the primary care. They offer emergent care, they offer emergency as it needs to be done at that time. But as we hear from the past speakers, the decline of health status of a community for looking at follow-up from pediatric to geriatrics, ED's are not geared for that, they never have been, they never will be.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

And shouldn't be.

MR. FELDMAN:

And should not be. So the impact of 33,000 visits plus on the local emergency departments will be dramatic.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

MR. FELDMAN:

You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Mr. Feldman. Next is Carlos Speight.

MR. SPEIGHT:

Good afternoon. My name is Carlos Speight, I am the CSEA President, a local President at Stony Brook University Hospital & Veterans Home. Presently I have over 2,600 members. I have presently 17 members at Elsie Owens Health Care Center. I have come here today to speak out against the proposed closing of the health care center.

I am not here to speak about the proposed closing because I have members that work at the center, which they will be either redeployed or reassigned. I am here today because the health care center is a vital part of the Coram community. The public employees that work at the health care center provide essential health care services. If the facility closes, who will provide these services? I'll tell you who, the neighboring emergency hospitals. They will become the former patients of the Coram Health Care Center primary physicians, which will add to the already rising health care costs, insurance premiums.

The County and State shouldn't look to close facilities that serve the public effectively. Coram Health Care Center is tax dollars well spent. The State trying to save OTB is a wasteful spending.

We have all heard the phrase time and time again "shared sacrifice". Sacrifice is a person able to do without something. Denying residents of Coram Health Care Center access to quality health care is not shared sacrifice. Everyone needs access to quality health care, it's not something a person or family can do without.

Also, shared sacrifice is not -- it also is not shared sacrifice when employees at the health care center lose their jobs. Once again, losing a job is not a shared sacrifice; a person needs a job to be -- a person needs to be employed to provide for themselves and their family. Thank you.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. And Arthenia Sealy-James?

MS. SEALY-JAMES:

Hello. My name is Arthenia Sealy-James, I am the newly elected President of the Greater Gordon Heights Civic Association. As President of the Greater Gordon Heights Civic Association, I am extremely concerned with the health and prosperity of the Gordon Heights community as a whole. The thought of closing the Elsie Owens Brookhaven North Health Center without a complimentary solution places undue harm on the community, leaving yet another unoccupied facility within the Gordon Heights area causing the community of Gordon Heights to appear desolate. This is not acceptable to the residents of Gordon Heights who own homes and pay taxes.

I am inviting the Legislators to make a financially-wise and encouragingly business sound decision on behalf of the Gordon Heights community which would allow for more affluent and not leaving the community left deserted and the residents forsaken. Thank you.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. Roberta Owens.

MS. OWENS:

Good afternoon. It's amazing to me that I would have to be here today to ask for something that in 1978 my Mom stood here before the Legislators and asked that you would support quality health care in Suffolk County. So I find it difficult at times to believe we're still doing this again. One of the greatest quotes that my mother had and that she would employ upon all the Legislators here -- and many of you are new, I'm sure you knew of her, but I'm not sure that there's many of you left that knew her when she stood before you -- was to do the right thing.

The Elsie Owens North Brookhaven Health Center is open because it helps people simply with their health care and community outrage. I am shocked that I have to leave my job to come and advocate for something that is a simple quality of life for everyone. And it amazes me even more, in this time of economic recession, that we would be questioning the common goal of quality basic health for human beings. 1978 is a long time ago, but long before that she was just a lady, a mother who moved to Suffolk County in 1959 and wanted to see a better place where she lived. Today we find ourselves facing a traumatic cut, a closing of a health center, that is a state-of-the-art health center, that provides services not only for the residents, but also in the case of an evacuation, bioterrorism, we have the facility that's there to take care of people and to take to make sure we all survive through it.

I'm questioning one thing by our Legislators, is that there has been funding that has been moved forward for other health centers, or proposed requests from the Federal government, yet I'm not quite understanding why that did not happen for the Elsie Owens North Brookhaven Health Center. I don't believe it would be the part or the role of the residents to do it. I actually believe it would come from our Legislative body; I'm shocked and surprised and disappointed with that.

When I went over the statistics, because I spend quite a bit of time on the advisory board finding what would be the medium, I find that 36% of the people are the working poor and those who consider themselves the middle class. As I recall as a child, many of the people who sat around this horseshoe were people whose children, as well as themselves, that had used the services of the

health center. I am asking today simply to find the funding for the health center, to not pass the buck, to not tell me to go knock on other's doors because I'm knocking on everyone's doors and I will leave none untouched. It is wrong to really make people advocate for simple basic health care by coming before you to ask you not to close the health center. It's a simple role and basic humanity. So I employ each of you today, and I'll be back, to do the right thing.

Applause

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Roberta, hold on a second. I think you were talking about the Federally Qualified Health Centers, the plan for that?

MS. OWENS:

That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. We can explain it a little later if you're interested, but I can let you know that when they did the research, and this was with the County Executive's Office that came to us about the Federally Qualified Health Centers, and what they looked at was you have to find an underserved community; the only underserved community at this time that was considered was the Bellport area. And they decided to go with three designated health centers that would most likely be eligible for the Federally Qualified Health Centers at this time. But the intent is is that we can continue to apply to get all of them in, but they felt that this was the best way to move forward so that we can get it for at least the first three and then continue to move with the other ones.

There was no intention never to include the Elsie Owens Center; the intention is to include it but they felt this was the best process to get it done. I didn't make that decision, that was a decision made from the County Executive's Office and, you know, his department, but we certainly want to make sure that the FQHC is for the Elsie Owens Center also.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Can I say something?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

John?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Roberta, thank you for coming out. While I did not have the privilege of meeting your mother as an elected, as a Legislator, I can remember when I was in the Office for Aging and in Intergovernmental Relations and met her and did know of her impassioned advocacy for, as you said, not just health care at the center of Coram, but actually for the network and the infrastructure of health care throughout all of Suffolk County for those most in need. And the fact that, as you said, the message was always pretty simple; do the right thing. Do the right thing, make sure that there is an open door and a safe, clean, healthy place for any of our residents to come to go ahead and achieve that health care.

The other -- and my colleagues -- I will tell you that my colleagues all embrace that sentiment. Each and every one of us around the horseshoe here knows of the importance of the clinic network throughout our County and how it interacts with our community hospitals, our emergency rooms and even our primary care docs out there and the role that they play, and we preach that on a constant basis. Having said that, nobody here endorsed nor subscribed to nor signed off on closure of the Elsie Owens Center or any other center for that matter. We heard the County Executive's message about identifying some centers for outright closure and other centers for possible funding cuts. Ultimately, it will be up to us to decide what does have to go on; he can propose, we'll ultimately

determine.

Having said that, I will say to you all of us have to look at what is a mammoth, unfair and unjust clawback on the State of New York regarding this critical health delivery network. So as you speak with us to tell us about the importance of us being fair, you need to carry that same message to our State representatives who apparently cared very little about equity here in Suffolk County. So I'd ask you to do that.

Applause

MS. OWENS:

Just to answer you, I have spoke at length with our State elected officials.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Good.

MS. OWENS:

I have not and would not be -- it would be neglect on my part only to come to one body. I am not that type of person. I'm sure you all know me, so you know I'm not.

(Laughter)

But there has to be some collaboration between the State and the County in order to get this done. Now, if I have to facilitate that talk, I have no problem with asking everybody to come to the table to do that. But I think it's your roll as elected officials to find that way to be able to speak to each other. I have to hold you responsible for that. You're elected, you're elected by the people, you're elected by your constituents, so I have to hold you responsible. Because when people barrage my personal telephone number to tell me that the health center is closing and ask me what they should do, I remembered the day that I was born, I wasn't called God.

(Laughter)

Therefore, I don't know what to tell them to do it and concerns me that I could find myself in that situation or you or anyone else, so it's going to take a collaboration. And as a member of the advisory board. I have all the intentions of bringing you all together to discuss this, because I think if we're able to move and make steps forward for our health care, we may be able to do it for the rest of our economy. That's my hope. I'm not pointing the finger at any one individual. Mr. Levy, as well is you, received a letter that I wrote on the 25th after attending the press conference. I was furious that I got a personal phone call at my house to ask me to be there to tell me about the closure of the health center. So I took the necessary steps as an individual, as someone who loved my mother and loved the dedication that she had to this County for all issues, to step forward to say you've got to come together and work. That's what we expect from you. And when those individuals are calling my home, I'm giving them your telephone number because you should be the ones answering them, not me to tell them that I'm going to get out every day, stop my work to go find them health care. This health care is through the County of Suffolk.

Stony Brook, I have spoken with them at length, I've spoken with Dr. Strongwater to ask him is he on board to keep the health center and he has said yes. So therefore, it's going to be a collaboration. And just to remind you, yes, of that old thing, that's what she did in the past, so I have no problem facilitating that.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay, good.

MS. OWENS:

I just want to make one other announcement. I apologize for being late here today. I got a call, and I'm sure you all know Dr. Francis Brisbane, the Dean of School of Social Welfare, her daughter passed away just moments before we were on our way here. So I really have to give my apologies, and I'm sorry I have to announce it this way but the family will be tied up and I'm going back to assist them. But it's a great loss in our family, Francis is a mother to me, always has been a very close and dear friend of my Mom. And so we're going to be facing some tough times, but it's all based around health, guys, that's what it's all about.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Roberta, before you sit down? You know, it makes your blood boil. And I happen to have known your mother, because I'm the one who is here longer than anyone else and I heard her advocate, I celebrated with her; a tower of a women, a real icon. But we're in a different time. We're in a time when in Washington, all they're trying to tell people is that they don't have to pay their way, that nobody has to pay for good government, that we're going to shrink government so people don't have to pay taxes; that's become the branding of today's rhetoric. And the collateral damage is the health and welfare of people who are the most vulnerable. That's what we're fighting today.

It's not around this horseshoe. It's not just the 18 Legislators who are here. We're swimming against the tide of a movement in this country that is saying to people, "We have to shrink government," and that's going from Washington to Albany to Hauppauge. And so what we're trying to fight against -- and I've met with Dr. Strongwater and I've talked to people in Albany about this, because it's unconscionable. But it's the rhetoric of the day, it's the mood of the American public. And all those people who are barraging you with calls, those people should be e-mailing Senators in the United States Senate and their Congress people. They should be -- we should be raising our voices, every one of us who believes in the dignity of the people who need the help, who need the clinics, should be raising their voices, because the people on the other side have been raising their voices. And the mission of government is the health and safety of everyone who lives here, and we're forgetting about that. When you have a Congressperson saying that, you know, cutting the deficit will mean Medicare and Medicaid are gone. And when you have Rozenberg telling us he doesn't want to buy the nursing home because it won't be profitable for him because of the cuts in Medicaid. Whose back is this on? It's always on the back of the vulnerable people. So our voices can't just be about calling you or calling me, which they should; you know, I went for this job, you didn't.

MS. OWENS:

That's right.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

And I welcome the calls. And when those calls come, we can be mad together, because I'm really angry at this negligence of the most vulnerable people in our society. And our voices have to be raised. We can't be afraid to say that we have to raise taxes to support the role of government, but nobody wants to say that. And our funds are being cut because nobody wants to raise taxes. And so the State is clawing back \$20 million, and where does -- where do we squeeze the stone to get what we need to provide the support for all of the -- for the mission of government?

You know, I thank you for your advocacy. I had great respect for your Mom, great affection for her, and I thank you for continuing advocacy.

MS. OWENS:

I just have one more thing to mention. You know, being raised as a child of someone that people have come to speak so dearly about is that you've got a lesson very clear and upfront. There was never a time my mother would go to any meeting that her children didn't come and sit on the side and so we had the opportunity to listen, and I do have other siblings. But I will say this; this is not

the first time we've ever been in a pickle. And if we're really lucky in our lifetimes, it's never going to be, even though we would all wish it would not be. So it's a pickle, and we've had tough times before.

I'm much older than I may look standing here, and so I've seen good times and I've seen plenty of bad times. But I do know this, when we put our heads together and we work together, we find a solution that works for everyone and not for some and then for others, then we collaboratively work to solve problems and make the world a better place to live in. And so I'm counting on everyone sitting here and I'm counting on the full horseshoe and the County Executive to do the job that that people elect them to do which is to be our voice where we cannot be and to make sure that they let people know that we want to see better health care in this County, we want our health centers to remain so that they can help people, and that we do not want to spend time just having dialogue about it, we want to take action. So I thank each and every one of you for your patience, for your time, but I will be back.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Roberta. Next is Lawrence Gray.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I think he left.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Lawrence Gray is not here. Next is Kevin Beyer? Is Kevin Beyer in the room or in the lobby?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Long Island Gasoline Retailers.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

We'll go to the next one and we'll go back to him. Pamela Mizzi?

MS. MIZZI:

I'm here.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Do you know -- did Kevin leave, Kevin Beyer?

MS. MIZZI:

I don't know.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay, we'll hold on to him. Go ahead, Pamela.

MS. MIZZI:

Good afternoon. My name is Pamela Mizzi. I'm the Director of the Suffolk County Prevention Resource Center. I'm here again about the energy drinks legislation. It's not going to go away. This issue is -- the energy drinks market is invested in making a cash profit at the expense of the health and stability of our youth. It's not good business or good government to subject our youth to these products that threaten their health. The use of energy drinks has increased so rapidly because of the addictive properties of these drinks and the aggressive advertising campaigns targeting tweens, teens and athletes -- student-athletes especially.

Energy drinks remain unregulated. I know there's a lot of controversy about how regulated they are, but the additives as a food additive and not as a food product they remain unregulated, allowing the manufacturer to attest to the safety of the ingredients. Not only are those ingredients harmful,

but we're teaching children that they can improve their mood and performance by ingesting excessive quantities of the drug caffeine enhanced by the synergistic effect of additional unimproved ingredients.

As tolerance and dependences rapidly develops, which it does, which it will on these drugs, often more powerful drugs are utilized. Some energy brands go so far as to promote their addictiveness as a selling point. We've seen Legislator Nowick with the cans labeled cocaine, using that as their product name. They entice you to unleash the beast or meet your new addiction. While energy drinks companies made light of the addictive properties of energy drinks, scientists, nutritionists, addiction and prevention professionals alike all know that the combined effect of the ingredients go far beyond the effect of caffeine alone, producing pharmacological Molotov cocktail in the developing brain.

Our children need our guidance and protection. This committee has an opportunity today to help parents in Suffolk County by considering this legislation to be a critical effort in the struggle to keep our kids safe and healthy, a topic of conversation this afternoon. On behalf of the parents of Suffolk County and the prevention community, I urge you to allow this legislation to prohibit sales to minors and warn the unsuspecting public of the known risks of energy drinks. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay, Legislator Eddington has a comment, question.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Yes, thank you for coming. And I agree with you about the modeling, you know. But haven't we done that? The adults in society by saying, "Oh, I have to get my cup of coffee at Starbucks or 7-Eleven or Dunkin' Donuts." Haven't we modeled that behavior for the children? Are we going to -- are we going to take responsibility or are we just going to put it on one group, because if you get up at a table with your kids, "Thank God, I can't talk to anybody before my cup of coffee," you're pretty much setting the pattern that I got to have caffeine in the morning. I mean, aren't we all doing that? This is a sign for yes and this would be a no.

MS. MIZZI:

Are you ready for my answer?

LEG. EDDINGTON:

I guess I am.

MS. MIZZI:

First of all, this is not about caffeine. It's about the rest of the ingredients and the effect they have on caffeine and the effect they have on the developing brain. Almost 45% of developing children drink an energy drink every single day. And, yes, you are absolutely right, that modeling behavior is very powerful and for parents who do state that they need to have a drink, whether it is an energy drink, an alcohol drinking or whatever it is, that's a very powerful message to children. This legislation would help parents to be responsible and it would also help parents when they're not in control of their children to prohibit those children from seeking those energy drinks.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Yes and I understand that part, that the guidance and protection of children is the parents responsibility. And when you say when they're not under the guidance of their parents, that's where I have a problem. See, my issue is that we're seeing more and more of that in society that "Well, you know, I wish somebody else would take care of it", and I really believe it's up to the parents. And I'm getting a lot of e-mails and things from my constituents saying that the parents should -- the parents have dropped the ball and they should be held more accountable, but I think that's where we have to look at it. I don't really believe that we should ask somebody else -- see, I

believe in education, not litigation or legislation. And I really think we have to do more parenting education to get this out. Because I think what you are saying is right, I just look at a different way of approaching it. But I do appreciate you coming forward because it's a very important perspective that you present.

MS. MIZZI:

Thank you.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. Next is Patricia Brodhagen. Patricia might be outside. I'll go to Edna Randall.

MS. RANDALL:

Good afternoon. My name is Edna Randall. I'm here to represent the Native American African and the Irish energy that flows through my veins this day and also remind us that once a man and twice a child. And that as much as I love, admired and was my mentor, Elsie Owens, let me be clear that all of the primary care doctors who have downside, closed their windows or shop, leaves a large population of people available to go to the center at Elsie Owens. I've heard that there's a crack in the circle of care or that some people are falling in the hole of a donut or the hole of a bagel. Well, I think we need to come to a compromise, find, search and find the bridge.

Now I heard reference day that the horseshoe is here. Well, as a Native American we're talking about horsepower. We need to use horsepower to make it brain power. There has to be a bridge that will give the honesty and the empowerment of education to the constituents. Cost control and economic factors indicate that emergency care far outweighs the cost of preventive care. When a person has a continuity of getting the care from a doctor that they trust, that they communicate with, then they can have the kind of dialogue where quality care can be improved and their longevity of livelihood increased.

The one thing that I feel is that you need to know that there are people who come as far as Deer Park, Levittown. I made a survey of my own because I wanted to know exactly what was entailing this particular issue. Now, apparently there's \$20 million of service, of money that was disappeared or lost, evaporated, whatever. But I know for sure when you put prayer and you ask, it is true that Saint Anthony can come in and assist, but we all have to come together at the table and we must -- you say go to the other place. And I started to ask what place. Okay, Senators, Congressmen, State, County Legislators. Well, I'm going to go there and I'm going to ask them the same thing as well as I want answers. But at the same time, the gentleman, Mr. Kennedy, said the buck stops here and that eventually all of you will be making the decision as to what will and what won't. Well, in view of what you've heard today and the allegiance and the continuity of support from whom we are standing here before you, what will you do now in order to communicate with the State representatives to let them know how sincere and effective that you are open and receptive to talk about finding a clear answer to this.

The other thing is that if it's all in Washington, whatever it takes, what we have to do is remember that when things are dismantled there's always a new foundation that's being resurrected, and in the resurrection of the new paradigm of health care, then we're all here and we're all a part of it. So we must all come to be part of the solution, not the problem. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Edna, I have to share this with you. Saint Anthony, right here.

(Laughter)

MS. RANDALL:

I'm glad to know they he's on that side of the horseshoe and that the synchronicity of spirituality, as a metaphysician it is perfect that you would say that to me to give me clout that the words have been spoken not only on this realm but in the spirit realm. And when do you that then everything has to come to a completion of what is required and desired. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I can tell you I use this for John J. Foley, I will use it for the health centers.

MS. RANDALL:

I thank you so much. At least I know I have your input of something going on positive forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Next is Mary Finnin.

MS. FINNIN:

Good afternoon. Thank you. I'm here today as a retired Public Health Nurse, a community representative. I also serve on several advisory boards, health center advisory boards and on the County Council of Advisory Boards. I'm going read some information that was given by one of your colleague 13 years ago about the elimination of health centers, which ignores several significant issues. The extended family is no longer living within the same neighborhoods. Good will of families, neighbor, friends will quickly be used up for providing rides to doctors and involves taking half a day or a whole day off from work. Centralization will reduce access to community based care and increases noncompliance resulting in increasing health problems and increased utilization of expensive emergency rooms.

As part of a group of advisory council members, we're putting together a packet of information on all of the health centers and hope to do a formal presentation before the board. But I wanted to come here today to say that if the Dolan and the Coram Health Centers are closed, if you look at the map, you can go from almost one end of the County to the other and not have a health center on the north shore.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

That's right.

MS. FINNIN:

We are going to give you the stats in terms of the people that are represented, the populations, the impact on the health services. But right now we're already in these health centers. This does not include Dolan, in terms of the number of patients seen, having over 300,000 visits for patients to receive primary care in our health centers. Now, we can't absorb those kinds of services in the local hospitals, and you heard before, Coram Health Center is staffed by Stony Brook. Stony Brook has gotten the largest cuts of any SUNY program in the State when it comes to funding their programs there. They can't absorb anymore. They are looking to survive with the programs that they have within their own hospital and educational facility.

But I know who else you can call. You can call Governor Cuomo and Michael Dowling. They chaired the Medicaid reform -- well, Michael chaired the Medicaid Reform Committee. Michael also chaired the Blue Ribbon Committee in Suffolk County 13 years ago when some of this testimony was given. So what goes around keeps coming around. And at that time they were looking to close the health centers too.

Now, you know, trade-offs were made with that reform up in Albany, and you and really have to talk to him and to Cuomo because the cuts came with -- because of trade-offs that were made by people for that committee. To have retroactive denial of money for services rendered is absolutely unconscionable. I think we in the community will support -- I would like to see the Legislature make a suit, file a lawsuit, in terms of that and the states needs to have the pressure put on. We can get buses and go up there because that is we -- we can't take back the TB care and the HIV care that were given for five years. To approve something and then deny it, you know, is, you know, absolutely outrageous.

Also, in terms of where is the money. I've said that here before. Why is our smoking dollars used for other things? We've had millions of dollars in the smoking fund that we used for tax stabilization and other things. That money could be funding all of these services now when times were bad and there were other cuts needed. So I think we have to take a hard look.

I'm looking at my tax bill. Out of approximately \$700 in County taxes, \$51.74 pay all of the service except for the police, which is \$648, so that there's a disproportionate tax on we the people for other services other than police. Now, I want safety as much as anyone, but health is a safety factor, too. You can't learn if you're not healthy, you can't work if you are not healthy. And if we don't take care of everybody we're going to see other kinds of problems in health care that affect everybody, whether you are rich or poor. So I think we're taxed disproportionately. People brought up the fact that to close those two clinics would be a disproportionate impact on one part of the County over others. I would ask you to not make any cuts until we have an opportunity to have a look at the total picture in terms of services needed and the funding. We're here to help you get that funding, and we'll go to Albany, but we need to get the facts. We're putting them together and we hope that you'll support us and we'll support you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Mary. But don't go anywhere. None of us want to make cuts.

MS. FINNIN:

I know that.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

But we had \$20 million taken away from us. If we can retrieve that 20 million we'd be in much better shape. But John has a question or a comment.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Mary, I just -- to fill out some of the things that you've put to us. The County Executive has directed the County Attorney to commence an action and, as matter of fact, I believe that they filed it. I don't know whether or not the hearings have started, but there is a suit against State health, specifically about the reduction, not only in the current year, but especially in the services delivered in past years. I mean, you're right on point where looking at a real breach of contract and bad faith on the part of the State Health Department to look at wanting to be punitive with us now, when we furnished these services in reliance on the fact that we had the contract with the State to deliver the funding.

You also point out a couple of very other critical aspects of the clinic, including the HIV/AIDS counseling that goes on there, which in all likelihood probably derives some Ryan White money, which is Federal funds. So I'm going to have to talk to the County Attorney to find out whether she's added that aspect to it. I don't think that the State Health Department can take back what might have been dedicated and specific Federal funds in the first instance. And then, finally, I never underestimate the power of a nurse.

(Laughter)

So we welcome your voice and your advocacy with us and we will not sit idly and quietly by while the State decides that they're going to make our Suffolk County residents victims of their budget slashing. That we won't sit and tolerate.

MS. FINNIN:

Well, I haven't given up on you keeping the Foley Nursing Home open either, and I'll give you some statistics on the growing needs for that area as well.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Good.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you, Mary. We do have last call, I guess, for Patricia Brodhagen and Kevin Beyer. I guess they must have left. I know -- did Joy Nebl, she left? Yeah? Okay, because I spoke with our Budget Review. I think what I'll do is Commissioner Tomarken, I will -- Dr. Tomarken, I'll give you her card. She talked about her 19 year old daughter who was, I guess, not getting medical services at the health center. I think maybe we should reach out to her and explain that her daughter still can receive some services.

Also, I guess, Craig, if you could just -- I think I explained it to Roberta Owens about the FQHC. If you could maybe just kind of explain it maybe better than I did.

MR. FREAS:

The Federal government, the Federal funds that we applied for, when we applied to become a Federally qualified health center, require the County to have what's called either a medically underserved area or a medically underserved population. And the Federal government defines that in a certain way. There has to be a certain poverty rate, a certain infant mortality rate, a certain amount of persons who are over 65 years of age in the population and there have to be a certain amount or a certain lack of physicians per 1,000 population in whatever the area is.

The only one that we have by index in Suffolk County is a census tract in North Bellport. Apparently the consultants that we retained, the County Health Department retained, to assist in the application also found a population, a medically underserved population, in an area called Riverside, which is in the Town of Riverhead, Southampton, along the South Fork. There are other areas in Suffolk County, among them Gordon Heights, parts of Wyandanch, parts of Brentwood, Port Jefferson Station, where some of the things -- some of those criteria are met, but most of the other ones are not. Poverty is a young phenomenon in Suffolk County so we don't qualify for much there, even though there are areas wherein infant mortality is rather high because of the relatively few number of births in the County. We have to use the County's statistics in a whole and infant mortality in the County is actually very good, mostly thanks to the work among underserved populations by the County Health Department. Our -- although we have a primary care shortage like everywhere else, it's not as relative - it's not as bad as it is in some rural places in the country.

And lastly, our aged population -- while our population in this County is aging, the aging population tends to be in more affluent areas so the demographic geography doesn't quite fit together, so we don't have these other two places. There are some other ways to get IMU's or to get, excuse me, to get medically underserved areas that the County chose not to do, at least for this initial application.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. However, the plan is to target all of our health centers to become Federally qualified health centers.

MR. FREAS:

Eventually, that's my understanding as well.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Right. Okay. Roberta, if you have any additional questions, you know, you know how to find me. Thank you. Okay. I believe with that -- is there anyone else who would like to speak? Dr. Tomarken or Commissioner Blass, do you have any comments or anything you would like to speak on? I don't know, Dr. Tomarken, I do have a question about the John J. Foley Nursing Home. We have -- I have visited the home regularly, and I know that there was a lot of equipment that was purchased. There was very large monitors, and one of them -- there was two purchased. One of them is in the Admission's Office and I'm curious what happened to the other one and where it is. Do you have any idea?

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

No, I will have to check on that. The other one was where? Do you know where it was located?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Well, they were in the storage room. They were packed in a room with a bunch of bariatric chairs that we don't need and other equipment that would not necessarily be needed for our nursing home. But there was two monitors and I was in the admission's room. There's only one in the admission's room. I was just curious where the other one might have gone to.

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

And you are talking about a computer monitor or a TV monitor?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

It's almost like a large screen TV monitor.

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

I don't know. I will check on it and get back to you on it.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. You have a question?

LEG. KENNEDY:

I do, Madam Chair. Thank you. Doctor, staying on John J. Foley, just two other issues. One is the electronic medical records terminals. I know that we saw at one point, I think, they're up and utilized on the fifth floor and they were going pretty well, pretty -- it seemed to be a good thing. I'm hearing recently, though, that many of those terminals have now been taken down and they're not being utilized. Is that, again, probably something you may not know directly about.

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

Yeah, I will have to check on that. I just don't know. I find it a little hard to believe. I think there's other equipment that may have been moved around, but as far as I know, those terminals are still there and being used. But I will double check on it.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. And lastly, I guess, I just ask about the status of the physicians there in the facility at this point?

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

We have reduced the medical staff from three and three-quarters or three and two-thirds physicians down to one and two-thirds, and our two nurse practitioners.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Good. And that's at this time sufficient for the purposes of caring for the patient?

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

Yes, the staff feels that they're staffed appropriately.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Good. Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay, thank you.

With that, I guess we'll go to the agenda.

Tabled Resolutions

2156-10 - Adopting Local Law No. -2011, A Local Law to alert consumers to the health risks associated with energy drinks (Nowick).

LEG. KENNEDY:

I'm going to make a motion to table that, Madam Chair.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

I'll second it.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. So we have a motion to table and a second. Was there some discussion?

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Well, I have a question for you. The Health Department was going to be doing some -- putting together an opinion on this?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Yeah, the Board of Health meeting is I believe May 11th, correct?

And there was going to be some discussion. We do have some experts coming in. Do you want to add anything, Dr. Tomarken, so I don't forget anything?

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

We're scheduled to have presentations by representatives of the energy drinks industry and we're trying to get an expert from the other side, so to speak, to address us one way or the other.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. And that's May 11th.

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Thank you. So we did have a motion to table and a second.

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

2210-10 - Adopting Local Law No. -2011, A Local Law to ban the sale of energy drinks to minors in Suffolk County (Nowick).

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Same motion, same second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Same motion, same second, same vote. *Tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*

2254-10 - Authorizing not-for-profit agencies to utilize funding for extra-contractual social services delivered to the County and its residents (County Executive). I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Second, Legislator Kennedy. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).

1086-11 - Creating a Bipartisan Commission to preserve Public Health Services in Suffolk County in the face of State Aid disallowances (County Executive). I believe there's a competing bill at some point.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Yeah, I'll make a motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

So make a motion to table. I'll second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? *It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*

1100-11 - Adopting Local Law No. -2011, A Local Law to increase awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco use (Cooper).

LEG. KENNEDY:

Motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Motion to table, Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Second, Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? *It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*

1162-11 - Adopting Local Law No. -2011, A Local Law to ban the sale and use of coal tar sealers in Suffolk County (Presiding Officer Lindsay).

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Motion to approve.

MR. NOLAN:

It has to be tabled.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

It has to be tabled, public hearing?

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, I thought it was closed.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Motion to table for a Public Hearing. Second, Legislator Viloría-Fisher. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? *It's tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*

Introductory Resolutions

1265-11 - Establishing a commission to address State Aid reductions and preserve health services in Suffolk County (Cooper).

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

I'll make a motion to approve.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Motion to approve, I'll second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? *It's approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*

1269-11 - Amending the 2011 Operating Budget to create one new position within the Department of Health Services and to accept and appropriate 100% Federal grant funds from the 2010 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) passed through the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to Suffolk County Crime Laboratory for the Firearm Laboratory Backlog Reduction Initiative (County Executive). Motion to approve and place on the Consent Calendar. Second Legislator Anker. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? *Approved and placed on the Consent Calendar (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*

1270-11 - Accepting 100% grant funding in the amount of \$66,959 awarded by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to the Suffolk County Department of Social Services for the Health Care Jobs 2 Program administered by the Suffolk County Department Of Health Services (County Executive).

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Same motion.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Same motion, same second, same vote. *Approved and placed on the Consent Calendar (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).*

1274-11 - Requesting legislative approval of a contract award for Oral Surgery Services for the Department of Health Services, Division of Patient Care Services (County Executive).

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Can I ask a question?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

We have a question for the Commissioner?

MR. FREAS:

It's for the jail.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Actually, I thought that was for the jail, actually. Sorry, I should have asked the position in 1269 for the Department of Health Services. What is that position?

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

That's to deal with the backlog in the Criminal Lab.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

The Crime Lab, okay. And the one we just mentioned is for the jail, Dental Services, right?

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, it's for the jail.

COMMISSIONER TOMARKEN:

Yes.

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

My question was where it was going to be.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

That's what I thought.

1291-11 - To appoint member --

MR. NOLAN:

You didn't vote. You need a motion.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Sorry. Motion to approve by Legislator Viloría-Fisher. Second, Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).

1291-11 - To appoint member to the Food Policy Council of Suffolk County (Paule Pachter) (Viloría-Fisher). I guess motion to table second All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***Tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:

Madam Chair, your office will be inviting him to the next meeting?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Yeah, we'll call him to come.

1298-11 - Accepting and appropriating 100% grant funding in the amount of \$170,400 from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to the Suffolk County Department of Social Services for the Green Jobs Corps 2 Program and authorizing the County Executive and the Commissioner of Social Services to execute a contract (County Executive). I'll make a motion to approve and place on the Consent Calendar. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Oh, a second.

MR. NOLAN:

You need a second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Sorry; second, Legislator Anker. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***Approved & placed on the Consent Calendar (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

With that, we have no more on our agenda. Motion to adjourn the meeting.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Second.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Third.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Meeting adjourned.

*(*The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 P.M. *)*

{ } - Denotes Spelled Phonetically