

**New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)  
New York Statewide Senior Action Council  
New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment**

For Immediate Release  
April 2, 2014

For More Information Contact:  
Suzanne Mattei, Patient & Family, 646-465-3635 (c)  
Russ Haven, NYPIRG, 518-436-0876 x256  
Gail Myers, Statewide Senior Action, 518-703-2617(c)

**Groups Offer Praise for State Budget Patient Safety Measure;  
Health Consumer Advocates Urge Hospitals and Nursing Homes to Comply  
in Good Faith with New Law on Safe Lifting & Moving in Healthcare**

Tucked inside the state budget passed this week in Albany is an important measure for patient safety, one that could reduce injuries for hospital patients, nursing home residents and healthcare workers. While praising the measure as an important first step, health consumer advocates cautioned that the new law's impact will depend on hospitals and nursing homes to comply with the law in good faith.

The new law requires hospitals and nursing homes to develop plans to ensure safety when patients or nursing home residents need help in moving about or being repositioned, such as in a chair or bed for comfort or to prevent bedsores. According to the advocates, however, the new law does not require the Department of Health to approve those plans or ensure they are fully implemented.

“The very good news is that the Department of Health will develop a set of best-practice guidelines as recommendations for safety plans. The disappointing news is that these guidelines will only be recommendations, not requirements,” said Russ Haven, Legislative Counsel for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). “That means we really are relying on the health facilities to act in enlightened self interest and put good programs in place,” Mr. Haven explained.

“A fall can result in serious injury, especially for an elderly patient. It is an event that should never, ever occur in any hospital or nursing home. So we are urging hospitals and nursing homes to do the right thing,” said Maria Alvarez, Executive Director for the New York Statewide Senior Action Council. She added, “We are also urging patients, nursing home residents and their loved ones to become aware of this important new law. They should ask their hospital or nursing home what their system is for safe lifting and moving in healthcare.”

“We're glad the Governor and the Legislature have recognized that manual lifting of hospital patients and nursing home residents is harmful and outdated,” said Suzanne Mattei, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Patient & Family Empowerment and author of the 2013 report, *The Case for Caring Technology* (see <http://patientandfamily.org/educational-information/safe-lifting-moving-in-healthcare/>). “Cost-effective modern technology exists to assist people. There's no excuse anymore for the undignified grasping and hauling that not only injures healthcare workers, but also puts patients and nursing home residents at serious risk,” Ms. Mattei stated.

Studies show significant benefits for the safety and dignity of patients and nursing home residents when proper programs are achieved. The United States Veterans Administration issued a policy for

establishment of such programs in all of its facilities in 2010, and eight states, including New Jersey, have adopted laws requiring such programs.

The new statute creates a financial incentive for hospitals and nursing homes to comply with the law, in the form of a reduced worker's compensation rate for implementation of an effective program. This provision was adopted, they noted, in light of the evidence that proper programs for safe lifting and moving in healthcare do reduce worker injuries. A 2013 study by the Fiscal Policy Institute found that these savings make investment in the modern equipment cost effective. (See <http://fiscalspolicy.org/safe-patient-handling-in-nw-york-state-an-estimate-of-the-costs-and-benefits-of-statewide-implementation>.)

“This new law is a first step toward a change that is badly needed,” said Ms. Mattei. “We are hoping that the hospitals and nursing homes will embrace this new initiative and implement strong programs, and we urge the Department of Health to do everything it possibly can to make sure that this happens.”