

SENATOR OBERACKER MAKES PUSH FOR HEALTHCARE STAFFING PACKAGE

ONEONTA – 10/18/21 – Senator Peter Oberacker (R/C-Schenevus) is joining with members of the Senate Republican Conference to call for a comprehensive legislative package to help alleviate staffing issues at healthcare facilities and for home care patients in communities throughout New York. The package includes measures to encourage and incentivize the recruitment of new healthcare workers, protect facilities, and analyze potential workforce impacts from proposed mandates.

The package includes a proposal from Senator Oberacker creating the Healthcare Workforce Innovation Fund to support efforts to improve the healthcare workforce pipeline through high quality training.

“The COVID pandemic has intensified and highlighted a growing healthcare workforce shortage,” said Senator Oberacker. **“We need to implement innovative solutions that will replenish our frontline workforce and ensure that well-trained professionals are ready to meet increasing demands. Creating a Healthcare Workforce Innovation Fund will unite educational institutions with providers ensuring that our next generation of healthcare professionals is well trained and ready to care for those in need.”**

Hospitals and other healthcare facilities have experienced an uptick in staffing shortages in part due to the vaccination mandate placed on healthcare workers that went into effect on September 27.

“There is no denying that the vaccination mandate is putting added stress on our healthcare system. I have consistently called for vaccine availability, particularly in the underserved rural areas I represent. However, leaving our healthcare heroes with no testing option or other means of remaining on the frontlines helps no one,” added Senator Oberacker.

The package from the Senate Republican Conference includes bills and action items to:

- Expand eligibility for STEM scholarships for students pursuing a nursing career;
- Create the Healthcare Workforce Innovation Fund to support efforts to improve the healthcare workforce pipeline by supporting high quality training;
- Allow graduates to practice, under supervision, for 180 days until they are able to get licensed;
- Call for interstate professional licensing reciprocity to increase the supply of medical professionals;
- Ensure nursing homes are not penalized for workforce staffing shortages;
- Require an impact analysis on any new legislation or regulation on healthcare facilities;
- Require DOH to disclose data on staffing shortages in healthcare facilities;
- Direct DOH and DOL to collaborate to be aware of and address workforce shortages;
- Expand the BOCES pilot to allow for earlier entry into a career as a Direct Service Provider (DSP);

- Provide loan forgiveness as an incentive to join the healthcare or DSP workforce; and
- Address the state's inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates; and
- Direct salary increases and a statutory COLA to support the direct care workforce.

“The demand for skilled healthcare workers is growing daily and we need to take steps to replenish our health facilities with trained professionals. This multi-pronged strategy will help in both the short-term and long-term ensuring that high quality care is available for all New Yorkers while making certain that our frontline professionals are treated with the respect they deserve,” Senator Oberacker concluded.