



March 28, 2012

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
Executive Chamber  
Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

*By hand*

**Re: The American Cancer Society Supports An Executive Order  
Establishing A New York Health Benefits Exchange**

Dear Governor Cuomo:

On behalf of approximately 10,000 New Yorkers who every year face a new diagnosis of cancer without benefit of public or private health insurance coverage: Thank You.

In addition to the ten percent of cancer patients uninsured at the time of diagnosis, one-third of cancer survivors report a loss of health insurance at some point in time following their diagnosis. Moreover, uninsured individuals are less likely to get recommended cancer screenings and are more likely to be diagnosed with cancer at later stages. For example, uninsured women diagnosed with breast cancer are 2.5 times more likely to have a late stage diagnosis than women enrolled in private health insurance.

The health care crisis is a cancer care crisis that must be addressed now. For too many, delay can be deadly.

Therefore, we applaud your reported decision, in the face of legislative delay, to create a health benefits exchange through executive order. We urge that you use your powers to the fullest available extent to assure the exchange serves the interest of the one million individuals and thousands of small businesses purchasing insurance through it.

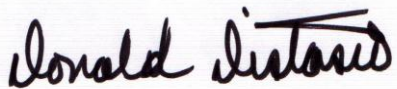
To do this, the exchange should have the discretion to determine whether health plans offered through it are in the interests of individuals and businesses qualified to buy insurance. In contracting with carriers it should seek to provide coverage choices that offer the optimal combination of choice, value, quality, and service. The exchange should be empowered to promote cost containment and quality improvement through such means as product standardization, payment reforms that incentivize the efficient delivery of health care, and aligning purchasing strategies with state agencies.

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Those appointed to advise on the establishment and operation of the exchange should serve the interests of the individuals and small businesses purchasing coverage. To that end, advisors should include representatives of consumer organizations, small business purchasers, and individuals with relevant expertise in individual and small group insurance, health care finance and administration, and public health. They should be free of financial conflict of interest, and should not represent entities such as insurers, agents or brokers, health care facilities, or providers affected by the exchange's activity.

Thank you for recognizing that New York must move forward quickly in order to achieve a consumer friendly, well-functioning health benefits exchange by 2014. The American Cancer Society appreciates your leadership in putting New York on the road to meaningful health care reform and extending to more New Yorkers access to quality, affordable health coverage. We are anxious to offer you, your commissioners, and staff whatever assistance and perspective we can provide on this vitally important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald Distasio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Donald Distasio  
Chief Executive Officer

CC: Mylan Denerstein, Counsel to the Governor  
Benjamin Lawsky, Superintendent of the Department of Financial Services  
Nirav R. Shah, MD, MPH Commissioner, New York State Department of Health