

New York health care workers fight Medicaid cuts

written by Anne Pruden

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Giving up their lunch breaks and a brief chance to relax, over 500 Brookdale Medical Center 1199SEIU union members rallied March 6. They gathered outside their hospital in below-freezing temperatures to show the working-class community of Brownsville their determination to stop Medicaid cuts.

Fiery speakers from 1199SEIU, the New York State Nurses Association and community supporters warmed up this crowd of self-sacrificing workers, who care for patients and their families. With a long history of struggle by and for mostly people of color, in this community with a large West Indian population, 1199SEIU members are prepared to struggle.

Health care workers and communities are uniting now to fight politicians in Albany, the New York state capital. 1199SEIU workers are holding rallies [across the state](#).

The Trump administration's federal tax cuts have [left New York state with a budget crisis](#). That has Gov. Andrew Cuomo and other politicians trying to make up the difference with a proposed [\\$550 million cut](#) to promised state Medicaid funding. The loss of federal matching funds would mean that New Yorkers stand to lose \$1.1 billion in Medicaid funds.

Rather than fight back against Trump or make Wall Street pay the difference,

Cuomo and his cronies want to push their budget crisis onto the backs of poor and working-class communities. Health care workers are saying “No!”

Already, 26 New York hospitals face a funding crisis that puts them on a [“watch list” for possible closure](#). These are hospitals serving people without insurance and the poorest who rely on Medicaid, including immigrants. In 2017, these facilities provided nearly 200,000 admissions and 3.5 million emergency room and ambulatory visits.

And, according to 1199SEIU, Medicaid cuts mean that “hospitals will have to cut community services. Hospitals are the biggest providers of care to Medicaid recipients and other vulnerable populations.” What discrimination against the poor and uninsured!

Homecare workers and nursing home workers can’t afford any cuts either. Union speakers explained that there has been no increase in the funding of Medicaid in 10 years. “Hospitals and nursing homes need funding to provide quality care and to support record Medicaid enrollment,” says 1199SEIU.

As shown by today’s spirited rally, workers can unite to fight back when under attack. As the Brookdale workers chanted: “Protect our care! No cuts!”

The writer is an 1199SEIU retiree.

Photos by Anne Pruden



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