



Cornell University
Student Assembly

The Cornell University Student Assembly
144 Feeney Ave, Suite 109
Ithaca, NY 14853

July 16, 2023

Commissioner James V. McDonald
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza,
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Commissioner McDonald,

The Cornell University Student Assembly and the undersigned students are incredibly disappointed in the NYS Department of Health's decision to discontinue support for the Student Health Plan Plus (SHP Plus) at the State's only Land Grant institution. As a pilot program unique to Cornell University, the NYSDOH had an opportunity to be a national leader in providing accessible healthcare coverage for low-income students seeking higher education. **Instead, we have regressed and reinstated a barrier to health equity that had previously been addressed by SHP Plus.**

First generation and low-income students continuously face economic adversity while pursuing higher education, and the rising cost of healthcare is no exception. For nearly a decade, SHP Plus has allowed these students to access consistent healthcare both in and outside of New York State. This portability, uniquely granted by the SHP Plus plan over student's previous medicaid plans, has allowed countless students to pursue previously inaccessible professional development opportunities across the country without anxiety from a lack of coverage. Students with an inability to pay for private insurance or the school's in-house Student Health Plan will have to revert to a Medicaid Managed Care plan (MMC) which has a smaller regional network and may even be county specific. This severely limits students' options in terms of the opportunities they are able to pursue and the professionals they are able to see.

While we understand that this decision was made in conjunction with other budgetary considerations, we urge the Department of Health to once again support economic equity for low-income students.

To cover all students who had planned to enroll in SHP Plus at Cornell University for the 2023-2024 academic year it would cost less than \$2,200,000. This is approximately 0.00001% of the NYSDOH total budget; a small price to pay for the physical, emotional, and academic well-being of our students.

All New York State students, not just those at Cornell University, deserve opportunities for upward economic mobility without anxiety for their health and well-being. In addition to restoring the funding for the SHP Plus plan at Cornell University, we would encourage the Department of Health to investigate the resources necessary to institute a similar program at every state funded school in New York.

New York State has historically been a national leader for progress. As such, we should be moving towards more accessible higher education and healthcare. The discontinuation of funding for SHP Plus is an active move in the opposite direction. Students should not have to choose between access to healthcare and their futures. We urge the NYSDOH to reinstate a funding plan that provides the same medical portability and healthcare accessibility as SHP Plus. The Cornell community at large is ready to help tackle these challenges and looks forward to the possibility of future collaboration.

Respectfully,

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Executive Vice President, Cornell University Student Assembly

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Vice President for Finance, Cornell University Student Assembly

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