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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Representatives Bishop and Israel Talk about Health Care Reform with Hospital Leaders

(Hauppauge, NY . . . August 17, 2009) U.S. Representatives Tim Bishop and Steve Israel met with a room full of hospital administrators today to hear first hand how developing reform legislation in Washington will affect the Long Island hospital community and the patients it serves. As part of the broader reform effort, these concerns include the necessity for physician integration, evidence-based medicine rooted in scientific studies, health information technology, and further administrative simplification of insurance claims processing. The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC) hosted the congressional briefing. NSHC is the organization that represents Long Island's hospitals.

"If we don't reform health care, we can't sustain it, because it is such a large part of our federal budget," said Congressman Bishop. "In order to have a sustainable budget, we simply can't maintain the status quo and carry forward."

"I want reform that protects people from insurance company abuses and bases medical care on quality instead of volume," said Congressman Israel.

This approach touches on an area of reform that would align payment for care with proven evidence-based medicine for diseases and disorders. While the current proposals in Washington, such as a proposal to penalize hospitals whose patients are readmitted within 30 days of treatment, would cast a uniform net over all providers, such an approach will not work, say hospital administrators, because not all providers are the same, and more importantly, not all patients are the same.

"Penalizing hospitals across the country for preventable readmissions doesn't make sense," said Aaron Glatt, MD, president/CMO of New Island Hospital (Bethpage NY), "because it isn't scientific. It doesn't adjust for variables." Such variables, including family members living in close proximity to the patient or the availability of 24-hour home care, will make a difference in a patient's recovery and potential readmission to the hospital, say hospital administrators.

"The issue of readmission can't even be discussed without the issue of our payment system," said Jeff Kraut, senior VP, strategic planning and marketing, North Shore-LIJ Health System. "Health information technology is a precursor to evidence-based medicine."

Universal adoption of health information technology continues to be problematic because of the lack of standardization on a national level and the high costs to implement the technology, especially for independent physician practices. Yet, health information technology will be crucial to health system reform, say hospital leaders.

Difficulty in implementing health information technology follows on the heels of barriers now in place that impede physician integration between hospitals and practicing physicians in the community. Federal and state anti-trust laws and other legal measures block the ease with which physicians and hospitals can work together.

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“Engaging doctors is key,” said Brian Currie, president/CEO of the Long Island Health Network. “You need to have doctors and hospitals working closely together.”

“The Long Island hospital community has always supported health reform,” said Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of NSHC. “In order to achieve it, there must be shared sacrifice on the part of all those involved.”



From left: Congressman Tim Bishop; Jeff Kraut, Sr. VP of Strategic Planning and Marketing, North Shore-LIJ Health System (Manhasset), Congressman Steve Israel; Aaron Glatt MD, President/CMO of New Island Hospital (Bethpage).