



Contact: Katherine Doyle
(845) 883-7260

October 29, 2010

PRESS INVITATION

Congressman Hinchey and Department of Health and Human Services Working to Help Rural Hospitals

Oct 15, 2010 - Ellenville, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) joined the United States Department of Health and Human Services Region II Director, Jaime Torres, and staff from Ellenville Regional Hospital for a conversation on what the federal government is doing to help rural hospitals attract the staff they need to provide adequate health services for area residents. Hinchey highlighted a number of recent pieces of legislation he voted for to help rural hospitals attract qualified nurses and doctors. He also discussed efforts the Ellenville hospital and community have undertaken to advance recruitment through a new program called HealthMatch, a service of the Catskill Hudson Area Health Education Center.

"Hospitals in rural settings face a unique set of challenges and there are a number of initiatives I have worked on to help address those challenges," said Hinchey. "One of the problems they face is trouble recruiting an adequate number of qualified nurses and doctors. What I've worked to do is to expand the National Health Service Corporation, which provides scholarships and student loan repayment assistance to help nurses and doctors who agree to serve in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area. It's been a tremendously popular program. We've made some great progress, but today was a good chance to check in and listen about what else is being done and what else can be done to address this situation."

Ellenville Regional Hospital is located in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA); a geographic area, population group, medical facility, or other public facility the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has designated as having an inadequate supply of qualified health care providers. The health care reform law also expanded a program to provide scholarships and student loan repayments for medical students, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and others who agree to a period of service as a primary care provider in full-time clinical practice in a federally designated HPSA.

During the visit to Ellenville, Hinchey and Torres listened to a presentation on HealthMatch, a collaborative new doctor recruitment effort between Catskill Hudson Area Health Education Center, the hospital, and the communities of Ellenville and Wawarsing. HealthMatch is a health professional recruitment service designed specifically for small and rural communities in New York State. It provides the expertise and real-world experience to effectively match the right primary care providers with communities in need. The collaborative effort helps bring the commitment of health care, business, and civic leaders together in order to provide increased local access to quality healthcare throughout New York State.

“I was raised in a small, rural community in Puerto Rico” stated Jaime Torres, “and I understand the challenges these underserved areas face in attracting healthcare providers. I believe the HealthMatch approach to engage the community and key stakeholders in the recruitment and retention process is innovative and can be leveraged with state and federal incentive programs.”

Catskill Hudson AHEC is devoted to improving the quality, geographic distribution and retention of healthcare professionals and to stimulate interest in health professions careers through education throughout its 11-county service area. The counties Catskill Hudson AHEC serves are Columbia, Delaware, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Otsego, Putnam, Rockland, Schoharie, Sullivan, and Ulster. For information on Catskill Hudson AHEC, visit their website at www.chahec.org and www.health-match.org.

#####