



News from Livingston County, NY

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State's Fiscal Watchdog Supports County Position on Medicaid Costs 'Don't Add to the Local Tax Burden', Says DiNapoli

Geneseo, NY, January 30, 2020 — Respected as an astute observer of municipal finances, New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli was the keynote speaker at the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) Legislative Conference in Albany this week. DiNapoli spoke to county leaders from across the state and took the occasion to show solidarity with the Livingston County government position on Medicaid.

In reference to Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2020-2021 Executive Budget, the Comptroller noted, "While this proposal appears to reflect the belief that local officials are responsible in some way for rising costs, clearly the ground rules for Medicaid are set at the State and Federal levels." DiNapoli also noted that the State "needs to partner with counties...to find real, lasting solutions without adding to the local tax burden." Additionally, he spoke of his audit authority and waste, fraud and abuse in the program. The Comptroller, the state's audit lead and the fiscal watchdog, recently [reported](#) on finding nearly \$800 million in savings and revenue in the Medicaid program.

These comments highlight the confusion in Albany among top elected officials when it comes to the "blame game" for Medicaid expenses. Cuomo is alleging that counties suffer from "blank check syndrome" as it relates to the costs of Medicaid. Yet, counties actually process, on average, only 40% of Medicaid applications via local district (county) employees with the state government processing the rest. This adds further confusion and disarray to the State's position on cost control.

Medicaid, the \$75 billion annual program that covers over 6 million – or about 1 in 3 – New Yorkers in some fashion and approximately 4,500 county residents as managed by the Livingston County Department of Social Services, is one of the most expensive in the nation. In

particular, New York State's Medicaid program is the most onerous, by any measure, for its fiscal impact on counties with the State charging local property taxpayers for a sizeable percentage of program expenses. While these Medicaid expenses (nearly \$9 million in Livingston County alone or approximately 30% of all property taxes collected) have been capped in recent years – leading to property tax relief – Cuomo is signaling that he intends to inexplicably unravel what is well-known as his signature local mandate relief achievement.

Livingston County Administrator Ian Coyle commented on the issue. "I applaud Comptroller DiNapoli. He is a straight-shooter and he is on point with this issue. Counties do not control the program elements – we are not at fault for the rise in program expenses. You cannot curtail nor contain what you do not control. "

Coyle further added, "Let's talk about real solutions versus playing games of trickery and issue-avoidance."

For more information on Cuomo's 2020-2021 Executive Budget, please click [here](#).

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