



# Empowering New York Consumers in an Era of Hospital Consolidation

NYS Health Foundation

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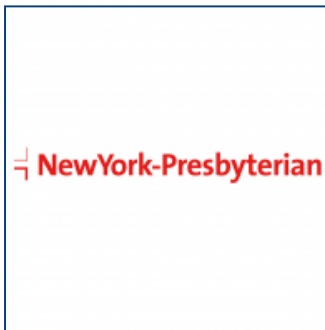
# Hospital Consolidation in New York State



41 acute care hospitals have closed over the last 20 years.

# Many remaining hospitals have joined large regional health systems

- 12 large systems now control more than half the acute care hospitals and 70% of the beds in the state
- **Four mega-systems** have acquired multiple hospitals, physician practices and outpatient centers.



# Potential impact of hospital consolidation on patients



- Patients may have to **travel farther** to receive care if local hospitals are closed or downsized.
- Patients may be treated by **unfamiliar providers.**
- When hospitals merge and reduce or eliminate competition in a local health care “market,” **health care prices could increase.**

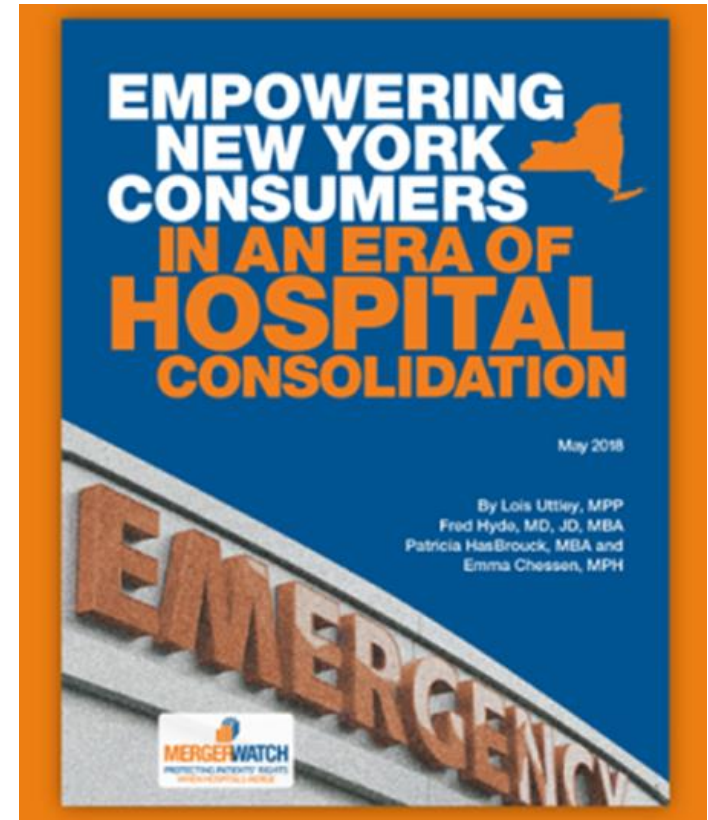
# Communities are protesting, but having little real effect

- Consumers who use Beth Israel have protested closure of maternity care, cardiac surgery and plan for smaller replacement hospital.
- Eastern Niagara County residents protested closure of maternity services at one hospital and now closure of the remaining hospital.
- Cornwall residents protested loss of their local emergency department.



# How can we give consumers a greater voice?

- State oversight of consolidation through the Certificate of Need (CON) process **lacks transparency and consumer engagement.**
- Consumers have **little or no notice or say** when their local hospitals are downsizing, closing or joining large systems.



# Barriers to consumer engagement in CON review: A few examples

- There is only one “consumer” seat on the 24-member state CON review body – the Public Health and Health Planning Council (PHHPC).
- PHHPC committee meetings, when public comment is allowed, are held on weekdays in NYC or Albany, with one week’s notice of what’s on the agenda.
- There no recommendations from local officials about CONs affecting their communities.
- There is no requirement for a public hearing before a hospital closes or eliminates its ER or maternity care.

# Changing the system to give consumers a greater voice

- Increase the number of consumer representatives on the PHHPC from **one to four**.
- **Require a public hearing** if a hospital plans to close entirely or eliminate the ER or maternity care.
- Create a **NYC Office of Patient Advocate** to receive and track consumer complaints, and use that information to comment on CONs from NYC providers.
- **Require every hospital to have a consumer advisory board**, and involve that board in review of proposed consolidation.





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