

Minutes of the Health, Hospitals & Social Services Committee
Bronx Community Board 8
Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 7:00 pm
Bronx Community Board 8 Office – 5676 Riverdale Ave, Suite 100, Bronx, NY 10471
[Meeting Recording Link](#)

Present (2): W. DeBeatham, MD – Chair; S. Matthews -Vice Chair

Absent (2): S. Chittilappilly & J. Gomez

Guests:

Zoom: K. Ureh (Presenter, CMS), M. Rabner, L. Spalter (Bronx CB 8), Dr. S. Safo (Presenter, Green Book)

In Person: P. Fram, J. Fletcher

Meeting Called to order at: 7:06 pm

Quorum not met.

Chair Report: Review of the state of affairs of the New York Health Act; Review of budget priorities

Medicare Fraud Prevention Presentation by Kimberly Ureh

Kimberly Ureh, a pharmacist and health outreach specialist for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), presented critical information on Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse, emphasizing community education and resources available for protection.

Summary:

Medicare Coverage Types:

Original Medicare: Comprises Part A (hospital insurance) and Part B (medical insurance); beneficiaries can visit any provider nationwide accepting Medicare.

Medicare Advantage: Bundles Parts A, B, and usually D (drug coverage), often with added benefits (vision, hearing, dental), but requires use of network providers and prior approvals for some services.

Fraud Awareness & Reporting:

Medicare fraud is prevalent, and it is vitally important that people are aware.

Community members are encouraged to report suspicious activities via **1-800-MEDICARE** or <https://cms.gov/fraud>. The site includes helpful information regarding fraud and how to report it.

Digital Access and Personal Information Security:

Community is encouraged to go to medicare.gov to create a digital account. This enables safe, electronic access to Medicare summary notices (MSN), claims data, and electronic health information

Community is strongly encouraged to guard their Medicare card and personal information rigorously to prevent medical identity theft, which can lead to false diagnoses, inappropriate treatments, or fraudulent billing.

Four Rs of Medicare Fraud Prevention:

1. **Record** appointments and services.
2. **Review** all bills and notices carefully.
3. **Report** any suspected fraud immediately.
4. **Remember** to protect personal information.

The Green Book for Health Initiative Presentation by Dr. Stella Safo

Dr. Stella Safo introduced the Green Book for Health, a community-designed project aimed at improving healthcare access and quality for Black communities, modeled after the historical "Green Book" that guided Black travelers to safe venues during the Jim Crow era.

Purpose and Background:

Responds to discrimination and inconsistent healthcare quality faced by Black patients.

Inspired by Victor Hugo Green's Green Book (1930s), which provided safe travel information during segregation

Components:

Resource Guide: Practical advice for before, during, and after medical visits, including steps for addressing discrimination.

Community Guide/App: Allows users to rate and recommend healthcare providers and systems based on their experiences, filtering by factors like insurance acceptance

Access and Usage:

Available as both a mobile app (currently on Apple App Store, forthcoming on Google Play) and a website for broader accessibility

Strong emphasis on community participation to build the database and improve healthcare equity.

Potential Expansion and Sustainability Challenges:

- Initial focus on pilot cities including **Houston, Atlanta, Detroit, and West Coast regions.**
- Seed funding obtained from Johnson & Johnson; additional funding sought from payers, hospitals, and other stakeholders.
- The goal is long-term sustainability without charging community members.
- Plans to develop evaluation programs and certification for providers excelling in equitable care

Future Visions:

- Potential for similar guides geared towards other marginalized groups (women, LGBTQ+) but current focus remains on successful implementation of this pilot.
- Integration with public health measures including white papers on best practices and systemic improvements

Community Discussion on New York Health Act and Healthcare System Challenges **[00:29:16]**

Community members and committee members engaged in an extensive dialogue about the New York Health Act, a proposed single-payer healthcare reform bill, highlighting pros, cons, and concerns.

Key issues raised by community included:

- The current employment-based insurance model forces individuals to stay in jobs for healthcare access, increasing stress and inequities
- Despite 95% coverage claims, many struggle to afford care, delay treatments, cut medication doses, or incur severe debt.
- Concerns regarding Medicare Advantage plans, and inconsistent network information reduce care access.
- Long existing healthcare wait times for specialists, and impact that single-payer would have.
- Unemployment benefits and retraining for displaced insurance industry workers
- Ethical arguments for/against universal healthcare from a community health perspective
- Problems with prior authorizations and surprise billing affect current care quality
- Questions regarding dental, vision, and long-term care coverage, considering historical trends

Legislative Outlook and Committee Updates by Vice Chair Stephen Matthews:

Due to lack of quorum and no legislative action in the last session, resolution or formal committee movement on the Act awaits fall sessions

- Need for a **detailed, accessible explanation** of how the bill would impact individuals and providers alike to improve understanding and support
- Recognition of the bill's complexity and the necessity to carefully examine fine details before advocacy
- Plan to have expert presentations, including from bill authors, for community education
- Noted the importance of learning lessons from other states and addressing concerns around taxes, coverage, and healthcare networks

Additional Committee Business:

Requests for further budget funding for harm reduction programs and additional domestic violence officers in the Bronx discussed, highlighting overlapping community health and safety issues

Consideration of future public health information campaigns including recent advisories on antivirals, Ebola, and SNAP rule changes to be circulated to the community

Meeting Adjourned 8:13 pm