

School-based health centers to benefit from new law

Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed a bill into law Wednesday that lets taxpayers donate to the state's cash-strapped school-based health centers by checking off a box on their personal income tax form. The law calls for the money to be directed to a fund that the Health Department can use to help pay for the expansion of services at existing clinics and to establish new ones.

The school-based clinics provide primary care, behavioral-health care, dental care, reproductive-health and preventive-health services to low-income pupils. New York leads the nation with 255 such centers, including 158 in New York City, providing care to more than 200,000 schoolchildren. They also help children manage asthma and other chronic health conditions.

"As the operators of the state's largest school-based health center program, we applaud Assembly Assistant Speaker Felix Ortiz, and State Sen. Velmanette Montgomery for their efforts to get this legislation passed," said Larry McReynolds, executive director of the Family Health Centers at NYU Langone Health. "We also would like to thank the governor for signing it. School health dollars have been at risk before, and this will go a long way to help sustain critical health care services for children of working families throughout the state."

Lawmakers estimated the tax-form checkoff could generate more than \$2 million per year for the school-based clinics.