

Collaboration can put Rochester at forefront of Medicaid reform

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Health care continues to be a major driver in Rochester's economy, employing close to 75,000 people.

But as the state and federal governments look to reform both Medicare, which covers senior citizens' health care, and Medicaid, which helps low-income and disabled people, the region could take a big hit in the government dollars it already receives.

Local hospitals already have endured some painful funding declines; for example, since 2009, Strong Memorial and Highland hospitals have absorbed \$33 million in cuts.

That's why it's important that Rochester stakeholders collaborate to be at the forefront of reform in this area. Representatives from local hospitals, Monroe County, pharmacies, major employers and long-term care facilities are just some of the people needed at the table.

Fortunately, there's a strong monetary incentive to do so. The health care reform act allocates \$10 billion to test innovations that can improve the quality of care or increase cost efficiency in Medicare and Medicaid.

Based on an already strong history of collaboration spearheaded by the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency and the [Rochester Business Alliance](#), the region should be in an ideal position to receive such funds.

It's helpful that Rochester got some well-deserved national attention this week when Dr. Jaime Torres, regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, visited to learn directly how collaborators are tackling numerous problems; some efforts naturally have a Medicaid tie-in. For example, a project focused on reducing unnecessary emergency room visits showed success when tested with some Medicaid patients.

Knowledgeable stakeholders should gather together now to help drive reform efforts that Albany can adopt statewide.