



Joining labor leaders statewide, Civil Service Employees Association members protested against hospital privatization at Stony Brook University yesterday.

STONY BROOK

Labor blasts health care privatizing

BY ZACHARY R. DOWDY
STAFF WRITER

Union leaders representing faculty at SUNY slammed a report urging privatization and consolidation of several health care facilities across the state.

"These hospitals provide a life-line for their communities, offering services many may not otherwise have access to," said William E. Scheurman, president of United University Professions, in a news release yesterday.

Scheurman testified at a hearing in Manhattan before the Assembly Standing Committee on Health, joining six other UUP leaders, activists and citizens who testified at regional hearings across the state, including Long Island.

They urged legislators to reject recommendations offered by the Berger Commission, which called for privatizing public hospitals in Brooklyn, Syracuse and Stony Brook.

If lawmakers can't arrive at a decision by Dec. 31, the recommendations will be

implemented automatically.

Those recommendations include nine hospitals and seven nursing homes as part of a shake-up of a system in which many hospitals are in bankruptcy and most nursing homes operate at loss. No Long Island hospitals are recommended for closing, but nine would undergo restructuring or downsizing.

Hospital officials and legislators could not be reached for comment last night, but Scheurman said he was concerned the plan would curb access to quality health care for the

poor and uninsured.

"If privatized, it is likely that many of the more expensive and unique of the critical services these hospitals provide would be cut back, or, more likely, completely abolished," he said.

Gov. George E. Pataki and Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer both endorse the recommendations while Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (R-Brunswick) and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) have not embraced it.

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