

# LI Youth Testifies On Medical Costs

By Lynn Rosellini

Hempstead—A 20-year-old Ocean-side youth, paralyzed from the neck down as a result of a football injury and faced with "endless" medical bills, won the admiration and the sympathy yesterday of two U.S. senators who are trying to find a way to ease the financial burden of problems such as his.

The youth, Kenneth Kunken, told a Senate subcommittee on health that he would need 24-hour care by an attendant "possibly for the rest of my life." His father, Leonard, said that the present system of health care offers no means to pay medical costs for his son, which he estimated at more than \$40,000 a year. After their testimony, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), the subcommittee chairman, said, "I'm a great admirer of his (Kunken's) spirit. It's an essential part of the health crisis in this country, when you can have this kind of devastation in a family." Sen. Peter H. Dominick (R-Colo.) told the Kunkens, "We hope to develop some kind of system that will be of assistance to you."

Yesterday's hearing on the Hofstra University Campus was one of a series that the subcommittee is conducting in the New York area. Among the nearly two dozen witnesses were representatives of United Medical Service Inc. the Nassau County Family Service Association, the Long Island Federation of Labor, the Nassau Emergency Food and Medical Services Program, and the Bicolony Alliance of Health Consumers. All of the witnesses said that some changes were needed in the present health-care system. Several said they favored a national health plan. Kennedy has submitted a bill to Congress offering such a program.

In the course of the hearing, Kennedy said doctors' bills have gone up

60 per cent and hospital bills have risen nearly 300 per cent in the last 10 years.

The senior Kunken told the subcommittee that a \$40,000 medical insurance policy covered most of his son's medical costs thus far, but he added, "That's all my son will be able to get (from the policy) for the rest of his life. But the expenses are endless." He said that despite current fund-raising activities, he probably would eventually be forced to "divest myself of all my belongings. And then what am I supposed to do?" he asked. The younger Kunken, formerly a junior at Cornell University and a linebacker on the school's lightweight football team, broke his neck last October in a game.

Earlier in the hearing, Rocco Campanaro, executive vice president of the Long Island Federation of Labor, told the subcommittee that "only a complete restructuring of the (health care) delivery system will do the job" of improving health care in the U.S. "This can come only with enactment of a National Health Insurance program," he said. Another witness, an elderly woman who refused to identify herself, said that a dentist refused to treat her when he found out she was on Medicare. "I was already in the dentist's chair," she said. "He said, 'I can't take you. I won't take you. You'll have to go.'"

New York (AP)—Gov. Rockefeller said yesterday he would submit to the Legislature a measure to encourage group-practice medical corporations.

Rockefeller disclosed his intention at a luncheon meeting of his Steering Committee on Social Problems, which earlier in the day issued a detailed study of the nation's medical care system and recommended increased emphasis on group practice.



Newsday Photo by Alan R.

Ongoing high medical costs are described for a U.S. Senate subcommittee hearing on health by 20-year-old Ken Kunken, of Oceanside. Kunken, who was paralyzed during a Cornell-Columbia lightweight football game, and his father were among almost two dozen witnesses to speak before Sens. Peter H. Dominick (R-Colo.), left, Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and a Kennedy aide at Hofstra University yesterday.