

Affordable Independent Senior Housing Resident Assistance Program A.3612 (Cymbrowitz)/S.3129 (Kavanagh)

Proposal: Appropriate \$5 million in the SFY 2022-23 Budget to fund the creation of an Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program to ensure affordable senior housing residents statewide have better access to existing community-based programs and resources for older adults, ultimately promoting healthy aging, extending independence and improving quality of life. This modest investment would create a cost-effective model for low-income seniors to age in place and stay out of levels of care more costly to taxpayers, such as assisted living or nursing homes. The program could be used in any affordable senior housing project statewide, including those created under New York State Homes and Community Renewal’s (HCR’s) “Senior Housing Program,” as well as any projects created pursuant to a future capital spending plan for the agency.

Background: Operators of multifamily senior housing insured or subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have long been able to access federal dollars for resident assistance, and research has shown that this model promotes emotional well-being, stronger social supports, and better connection between aging residents and needed programs and resources. The importance and value of this type of assistance for aging individuals were highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which created acute social challenges impacting emotional and physical wellbeing of older adults living independently in senior housing. Unfortunately, HUD funding for resident assistance has been reduced significantly in recent years, leaving a gap in coverage for residents of some HUD-assisted properties, as well as those properties that have received State capital dollars in exchange for long-term affordability.

Examples: Resident assistants would work to identify residents’ unmet needs and effectively coordinate the provision of assistance to extend a person’s ability to live independently, including: (1) establishing and maintaining networking relationships with community-based programs and organizations; (2) providing residents with information and referral lists for community resources, and assisting them with follow-ups; (3) arranging for educational and socialization programs for residents; (4) helping residents arrange for housekeeping, shopping, transportation, meals-on-wheels, cooking, and laundry services; (5) establishing resident safety programs; and (6) advocating for residents.

Proven Savings: This strategic and modest investment in resident assistance will allow low-income senior residents to remain in their homes and age-in-place, connecting them to outside health, wellness, and other supports, and delaying or preventing reliance on high-cost Medicaid services. In a [New York-based study](#), residents of Selfhelp who had access to assistance were 68% less likely to be hospitalized than other seniors living in the same zip codes without access to assistance, and the average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization was \$3,937 less for residents with access to assistance. Furthermore, a 2016 study of residents in affordable housing in Oregon showed that Medicaid costs declined by 16 percent just one year after seniors moved into communities with resident assistance programs.

Support the healthy aging of New York State’s senior population by making a strategic investment in the Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program!