

MEMORANDUM

A.4358 (Cymbrowitz)/S.4538 (Kavanagh)

AN ACT to amend the private housing finance law, in relation to establishing an affordable independent senior housing assistance program

The final 2017-18 State Budget provided \$125 million in capital appropriations over five years for the construction and rehabilitation of 100% senior housing, targeted to residents aged 60 and above. LeadingAge NY and a coalition of senior housing organizations and advocates strongly support A.4358 (Cymbrowitz)/S.4538 (Kavanagh), which would bolster this historic commitment through the creation of an Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program. Resident assistance provided under this program would include an array of optional services that promote independent living, allowing seniors to remain in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs and preferences and keeping them out of more costly levels of care.

Operators of senior housing have, for many years, been able to access federal dollars for resident assistants through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Research has shown that resident assistance programs in senior housing, such as the HUD Section 202 Service Coordinator Program, promote emotional well-being and stronger social supports, higher resident awareness of services, and better linkages between residents and needed services. Unfortunately, the HUD funding never met the demand for resident assistance programs across New York State and has been reduced significantly in recent years.

Under the Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program, resident assistants would provide so-called “light-touch” services that may include: (1) establishing and maintaining networking relationships with community-based services and organizations; (2) providing residents with information and referral lists for community services, 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.

Resident assistants in senior housing have proven to reduce health care costs. Findings released by New York City-based Selfhelp Community Services in 2017 demonstrate that residents living in their affordable senior housing with services were approximately 68 percent less likely to be hospitalized than the comparison group. Additionally, the average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization was \$1,778 for Selfhelp residents, versus \$5,715 for the comparison group.

Developing an Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program to complement the \$125 million in senior housing capital appropriations would help address the needs of New York’s growing senior population while also providing savings for the State’s Medicaid program. For these reasons, LeadingAge New York supports A.4358 (Cymbrowitz)/S.4538 (Kavanagh) and urges that it be adopted.

LeadingAge New York represents nearly 500 not-for-profit and public long-term care providers, including nursing homes, home care agencies, senior housing, retirement communities, assisted living, adult care facilities, adult day health care and managed long term care.