

MEMORANDUM

A.1948-A (Rosenthal)/S.9214-A (Cleare)

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

LeadingAge New York and a coalition of senior housing organizations and advocates strongly support this legislation to create an Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program that would connect low-income, aging residents living in affordable senior housing with community resources that foster healthy, independent living and help keep older adults out of more costly levels of care.

A total of \$425 million in capital has been committed to developing affordable housing for low-income seniors in recent five-year spending plans for Homes & Community Renewal, but without the complementary Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program, many of the low-income older adults who ultimately occupy these properties are likely to struggle when navigating the network of health and social supports designed to help them age safely in place.

Through this program, which is highlighted as a key community housing model in the State's Master Plan for Aging, low-income older adults would be provided on-site and on-request assistance in affordable senior housing buildings, including help enrolling in essential benefits, connecting with preventive services, and arranging for social and wellness programming in the building. The program would address the root causes of avoidable health issues and help stabilize residents before their needs escalate into costly emergency room visits, hospital stays, or nursing home placements.

In addition to promoting housing stability and general wellness for low-income older adults, Resident Assistance in senior housing has been proven to reduce health care costs. A rigorous New-York based study of the Selfhelp Active Services for Aging Model (SHASAM), featured in *Health Affairs*, found that the average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization was \$3,937 less for Selfhelp residents as compared to older adults living in the same Queens zip codes without assistance, and Selfhelp residents were 68% less likely to be hospitalized.

Based on LeadingAge New York's analysis of this data and the SHASAM model, an investment of \$10 million in State funds over five years would allow for Resident Assistants in at least 16, 100-unit affordable senior housing buildings, serving approximately 1,600 low-income older adults. Further, this investment would generate an overall State-share savings of at least \$6.5 million per year, amounting to a net savings of \$4.5 million to the State annually.

Especially given the workforce challenges plaguing higher-level health and long-term care settings, the State must pursue and invest in modest and innovative programs that support healthy aging NOW – before our independent seniors need more advanced care. The Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program established by this bill would help meet the needs of our growing aging population while providing savings and relief to New York's strained health care system. **For these reasons, LeadingAge New York strongly supports A.1948-A (Rosenthal)/S.9214-A (Cleare) and urges its adoption.**

LeadingAge New York represents over 350 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.

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