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**LEGISLATORS LEND SUPPORT TO NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS AND CAREGIVERS**

*Nursing Home Crisis is Real; More than 70,000 Long-term Care Beds in Jeopardy as Reimbursement Rates Fail to Meet Cost of Care*

A coalition of state legislators is joining LeadingAge New York to highlight the needs of older adults in nursing homes and their caregivers as state budget discussions intensify. Advocates are requesting the restoration of harmful cuts to capital funding and additional needed investments in Medicaid rates for those receiving care in New York's nursing homes.

Assemblymember Carrie Woerner (Round Lake), a vocal advocate for older New Yorkers, is helping lead the initiative among her colleagues. Woerner is urging her colleagues to address the needs of individuals with complex medical conditions requiring 24/7 care through increased nursing home Medicaid reimbursement in the upcoming budget proposal.

She was joined at a Capitol news conference by Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright; and Senator Cordell Cleare; Patricia Tursi, Board Chair of LeadingAge New York; Andy Cruikshank, CEO of Fort Hudson Health System (Warren County); family advocates; and LeadingAge NY members from across the state.

The Assembly and Senate are compiling their respective budget resolutions, and the additional support for the long-term care providers struggling to stay in operation and meet the needs of older adults is at the top of their priority list.

More specifically, LeadingAge has called for:

- Permanent increases to nursing home reimbursement rates to address a statewide Medicaid funding gap of \$1.6 billion and reflect the rising cost of services; and
- Restoring a \$41 million capital cut, enacted in 2020 and 2024, to enable providers to offer safer, more homelike facilities and to honor financial commitments incurred in good faith before the state reneged on funding promises.

"This is the third, consecutive year I am holding a press conference regarding our statewide nursing home crisis that has resulted from severely inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates. I am committed to drawing attention to the number of nursing home closings and near-closings that are painfully impacting our constituent's throughout New York. The chain reaction that occurs from the lack of nursing home staff and beds is significant. It backs up emergency rooms and hospital rooms and other long-term care facilities, and the problem is just getting worse and more pervasive. I hope you will join me in urging the Governor to help care for New York's older adults and families," said **Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner**.

"The lack of long-term investment in our Medicaid program has led to the closure of many nursing homes across the State, taking essential beds offline, and creating hospital discharge issues. This along with our State's well documented workforce shortage and increased costs are leaving countless older and disabled New Yorkers and their families with a limited number of high-quality skilled nursing care close to home," said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. "As we enter budget season, the Legislature must work diligently to increase Medicaid rates for nursing homes."

“It’s unconscionable that over 70,000 nursing home beds are in jeopardy because we have under-invested in Medicaid and reneged on capital funding for long-term care providers,” said **Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright**, chair of the Aging Committee, which oversees legislation and agencies affecting New York’s older adults’ quality of life and independence. “I’m proud to stand with LeadingAge in calling for both the increase and restoration of this critical funding. Because caring for our aging loved ones is not a partisan issue, it’s not an upstate or downstate issue, it’s a human issue that affects all of us.”

**Patricia Tursi**, CEO of Elizabeth Seton Children’s Center in Yonkers, and LeadingAge’s Board Chair, said: “As a virtually 100% Medicaid funded facility, Elizabeth Seton Children’s Center urgently requests a full restoration of the capital cuts made to nursing homes, which has a negative impact of nearly half a million dollars annually to our bottom line. We also request enhanced funding so that our 169 children and young adults with medical complexity can continue to receive the highest quality medical and therapeutic services, delivered with love and tenderness, which they are accustomed to and deserve. As the demonstration project for the first of its kind young adult center, slated to break ground this spring, the capital cut could halt progress on this life-saving home for young adults with complex medical needs. Additionally and importantly, Medicaid funding directly impacts our ability to recruit and retain highly qualified clinicians. Adequate Medicaid funding is a lifeline for equitable and accessible care, which is why we have to work together to ensure that long-term care services are prioritized in this year’s Executive Budget for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.”

**Andy Cruikshank**, of Fort Hudson Health said: “We are running out of time. Approximately 15 years of zero inflation adjustments and cuts to capital have brought nursing homes to a point of financial starvation. While recent investments have been helpful, they have not gone far enough to address the root problem. We predominantly serve older adults who rely on Medicaid. Meanwhile, outdated reimbursement leaves the care of one of every four nursing home Medicaid residents essentially unpaid for. Quality homes who prioritize staffing can’t survive.

It’s time for Albany to take meaningful steps to ensure that older adults and families have quality options for nursing home care when the need arises.

***Kate Neils**, daughter of a resident of The Community at Brookmeade said: “My mother, Christina lives and receives care in a nonprofit nursing home in Rhinebeck, New York. She has lived there for 3 years and 1 month, and I am so grateful that I know she is receiving the best quality of care, and is offered the best quality of life possible, only 5 minutes from my own home. I cannot imagine what we would do as a family if we didn’t find a good nursing home for my Mom when she needed it. Yet, I know that is the experience of many families statewide, particularly in rural areas. In many cases, our parents are waiting for hours in emergency rooms to receive hospital care. Then, when they are ready to leave the hospital, they are sometimes waiting for days more to find a nursing home that can admit them if needed. Based on what I have experienced, it is clear that the State is not doing all that it can to care for people as they age and as they have more health care needs. I urge the State to do everything it can to pay for the high-quality care and staffing that our parents and grandparents deserve. We have to do more as a state to take care of people as the age and become more vulnerable.”*

**Sebrina Barrett**, LeadingAge New York’s CEO said: “The combination of inadequate funding, rising costs, a health care workforce shortage, with the growing number of aging families, is contributing to an access to care crisis in New York State. The rate of reimbursement for nursing home care has been so low, for so long, that more and more providers are closing their doors, downsizing and turning away new admissions. This is most acute in our non-profit nursing homes, where thousands of beds have already closed or are at risk of closure. Medicaid rates do not reflect modern-day resident needs and workforce wages. As a result, many older New Yorkers experience delays in being discharged from hospitals, and too often cannot find long-term care options they need in their home communities, near their loved ones.

We are grateful for Assemblywoman Woerner and other members of the Legislature who have joined us in advocating for meaningful and much-needed investments in the care and quality of life for the older adults, children and others who live in New York’s nursing homes.”

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*For more than 60 years, LeadingAge New York has set an advocacy agenda for not-for-profit, and government sponsored nursing homes, senior housing, adult care facilities, retirement communities, and other settings serving older adults.*