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**CALLING ON THE NATIONAL GUARD WILL NOT SOLVE THE CRISIS FACING
WESTERN NEW YORK HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES**

**THE SOLUTION STARTS WITH AN INCREASE IN MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT
AND AN INVESTMENT IN TRAINING FOR DIRECT CARE STAFF**

LeadingAge New York is urging Governor Kathy Hochul to provide an immediate Medicaid rate increase to New York's nursing homes to enable them to staff their facilities appropriately, deliver high-quality care to their residents and relieve hospital overcrowding.

"There is a health care crisis in New York that needs to be addressed immediately," said Jim Clyne, President and CEO of LeadingAge New York. "Nursing homes are unable to recruit and retain workers because New York's Medicaid rates don't cover the cost of care."

Chris Koenig, CEO of Niagara Lutheran Health System, said, "The entire health care sector continues to be under stress. The simple fact is there are not enough licensed professionals to match the number of residents and patients in hospitals and nursing homes."

"We cannot think the problem will go away without taking a longer-term view to invest in those who provide direct patient care such as nurses and certified nursing assistants. A career ladder is a key element to meeting the demands of the health care workforce," Koenig continued.

"We have many nurse vacancies that I would hire for today if I could. Unfortunately, we do not have the people applying and showing interest in serving our elderly and most vulnerable. While we do everything we can to incentivize workers and offer robust benefits, it is an ongoing challenge to compete for workers having not had a Medicaid cost-of-living adjustment in over 12 years. When a large percentage of your residents are Medicaid recipients, it becomes a real challenge to find ways to make up the loss in reimbursement and simultaneously offer competitive and sustainable wages," Koenig concluded.

New York State's Medicaid program covers over 72 percent of the days of care in the state's nursing homes. The State has not provided a cost-of-living increase in more than a decade.

"Governor Hochul has the authority to act immediately by providing an emergency Medicaid rate increase to nursing homes. Doing so before the end of December will guarantee that the State can take advantage of enhanced federal matching funds, lowering the Medicaid cost for the State," said Clyne.

In a news conference on November 29, Governor Hochul announced she would be deploying New York National Guard members who are certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) to assist New York nursing homes with staffing challenges. During the conference, the Governor acknowledged that the lack of available nursing home staff is causing a ripple effect throughout the health care system. Hospitals in several regions of the state, including Western New York, have been unable to discharge patients who need home health care or nursing home care. As a result, hospital beds are not available for patients who need acute care, and elective surgeries are being postponed.

“Temporary steps like deploying the National Guard are like putting a band-aid on a gaping wound. They are not a substitute for a real plan to address the care of the older adults and people with disabilities served by our state’s dedicated nursing home providers. The State’s decision to cut nursing home funding by \$160 million in the middle of a pandemic has only made the provision of care more difficult. The State needs to immediately reverse its decade-long policy of underfunding long-term care services,” said Clyne.

“While we appreciate the Governor’s attention to the issue of nursing home staffing, leveraging the National Guard to fill in the staffing gaps in nursing homes will not deliver the consistent and specialized care that residents need. Imagine being a resident of a nursing home and seeing the National Guard come to your room to provide your care. Nursing home residents deserve to be cared for by familiar, professional and dedicated staff. The best way to build the dedicated workforce our loved ones in nursing homes deserve is by enabling nursing homes to offer competitive wages to recruit and retain highly qualified workers,” Clyne continued.

An effective solution to the long-term care workforce crisis requires collaboration between providers and state leaders. On November 10, 2021, LeadingAge New York sent a [letter to the Governor](#) highlighting the State’s lack of financial support and response to the needs of nursing homes and their residents throughout the pandemic. That letter is still awaiting a response from the Governor’s office, but LeadingAge New York is hopeful that there will be opportunities to collaborate in the future.

“We understand that Governor Hochul did not create this crisis, but it is here right now, and it needs to be addressed by the administration. Providers are struggling to deliver care while grappling with the worst staffing shortages in memory,” Clyne said. “With existing Medicaid rates, nursing homes simply cannot offer competitive compensation to their personnel, who perform skilled, sensitive and highly demanding jobs.”

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 and retirement communities. Since the onset of the public health emergency in March 2020, LeadingAge New York has been an outspoken voice for long-term care providers, caregivers and residents.

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LeadingAge New York represents 400 not-for-profit, mission-driven and public aging services providers, including nursing homes, senior housing, adult care facilities, continuing care retirement communities and assisted living and community service providers.