



December 16, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

RE: Affordable Independent Senior Housing Assistance Program

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of a statewide coalition of organizations concerned for New York's senior population, I am writing to ask that you support the inclusion of funding to establish an Affordable Independent Senior Housing Resident Assistance Program in the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2022-23 Budget, with an investment of \$25 million over five years.

Older New Yorkers are the fastest growing demographic in our state and will comprise an estimated 4.1 million households statewide – or 20 percent of the population – by 2027. Nearly one in 10 of today's older New Yorkers live in poverty, and nearly 80 percent of low- and extremely low-income senior renters live alone, so we can reasonably expect that a significant portion of our growing senior population will continue to rely heavily on subsidized housing and community services to age safely and independently in place.

This coalition proposes that the SFY 2022-2023 Budget include a **\$25 million, five-year investment in an Affordable Independent Senior Housing Resident Assistance Program** to create a cost-effective model for seniors living independently in affordable housing to age in their own homes with the support of Resident Assistants. Resident Assistants connect residents with existing programs and resources for older adults by maintaining relationships with community-based organizations, providing residents with information and referral lists for community programs, and arranging for educational, socialization and resident safety programming.

Research indicates that this low-cost Resident Assistance model would result in significant savings to the State by reducing the cost and frequency of emergency room visits for Medicaid recipients and by helping older adults remain independent and stay out of more costly levels of care. A New York-based study of Selfhelp, one of the largest non-profit senior service agencies in the New York metropolitan area, compared Selfhelp residents with access to Resident Assistants to senior residents of the same zip codes without this support. The study found that

residents with access to assistance were 68 percent less likely to be hospitalized, and the average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization was \$3,937 less for residents with access to assistance. Furthermore, with this successful model in place, only two percent of Selfhelp's low-income residents are typically transferred to nursing homes in any given year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the critical need for low-cost, "light-touch" supports to help older adults remain independent when possible, but also feel connected and supported by a community. Right now, hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and even home care agencies are struggling to accommodate overwhelming demand for their specialized services. Meanwhile, social isolation and pandemic-related barriers to connecting with community resources continue to threaten the ability of older adults outside the formal care system to remain healthy and independent.

The State must invest in practical, low-cost aging services models that allow us to re-think the way that we care for and support our older New Yorkers. Making this investment now will allow seniors currently living in an affordable senior housing unit without resident assistance to have a better chance at accessing life-changing community-based services that they may not be aware of or have access to.

I urge you to support the healthy aging of New York's seniors by establishing the Affordable Independent Senior Housing Resident Assistance Program in the SFY 2022-2023 Budget.

Thank you for your work to ensure that elderly residents throughout the state may continue to live independently and safely in the homes and communities of their choice.

Sincerely,

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