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ESAAL Members Testify at Central New York Legislative Hearing

Inadequate State Reimbursement and Increasing Costs Are Forcing Upstate Adult Care Facilities to Close

Members of the Empire State Association of Assisted Living (ESAAL) today testified at the New York State Assembly hearing on Adult Care Facilities (ACFs), detailing how assisted living providers are struggling under the rising costs of caring for the state's growing elderly population. The hearing was held at the John H Hughes State Office Building in Syracuse.

ACFs, commonly known as adult homes, enriched housing programs, or assisted living residences provide a critical service for New York's elderly population such as housing, food, assistance with their personal care needs, and medication monitoring. For the low-income population, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) pays for all of these services.

James Kane Jr., operating partner of Adirondack Manor HFA and ESAAL board member, recently closed two residences – Valehaven Home for Adults in Oswego and Malone. According to Kane, almost all of the home's revenue comes from SSI payments provided by the federal government and the state. While the federal government has offered incremental increases, the state has ignored the issue. The current rate in New York is \$41 per day, which was set in 2007. The state's phased-in 2007 increase was the only increase in 25 years. Adirondack Manor previously operated 14 homes; following the two recent closures, only six remain.

"The rate is inadequate," said Kane. "We are simply unable to provide care and services 24-hours, seven-days per week for \$41 per day. Unfortunately, both residences had been operating at a financial loss for some time. We hoped the state would step up and authorize a SSI rate increase, however when it failed to do so earlier this year, we made the difficult decision to submit a closure plans to the state Department of Health."

[In her testimony Lisa Solazzo](#), administrator of Valehaven Home for Adults in Oswego, characterized the emotional toll and personal magnitude of the closure, "Closing Valehaven has been one of the most difficult experiences of my life. As administrator, I managed the closure and helped the remaining residents find alternative accommodations. As hard has this has been for me, it has been even more difficult for our residents. They have not only lost their home, they have lost their community connection.

Solazzo continued, “Every week at Valehaven, we would have local church groups and other community groups visit. Residents know the programs; they are familiar with the people. Now that they have moved, they have lost all of these community supports. It’s a very sad situation.”

Legislation A.6715B/S.6732 (Brindisi/Serino) will soon be transmitted to Gov. Cuomo that was unanimously approved by the state Legislature to increase the SSI rate by a total of \$20 per day over a five-year period.

“Health insurance premiums for assisted living staff have increased by 51 percent; the minimum wage has increased 54 percent; and food costs have outpaced inflation by 60 percent,” said Lisa Newcomb, executive director of ESAAL. “Without an increase in SSI, more residence doors will close and many low-income seniors, unable to live on their own, will be forced out of their homes and in many cases into costly nursing homes. This issue must be addressed today.”

For more information, please visit ESAAL at <http://www.esaal.org> and follow on twitter @essalNYS .