



For Immediate Release:
August 7, 2017

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INADEQUATE STATE FUNDING CLOSES ANOTHER HOME FOR SENIORS

New York's Low SSI Rate is Forcing Adult Care Facilities to Close, Threatening the Care of 12,000 Seniors

Adirondack Manor Home for Adults - Valehaven in Malone, NY closed its doors Friday following more than 40 years of service. It is the latest adult care facility to close as a result of the state's failing to authorize an increase in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rate.

New York's adult care facilities (ACFs), commonly known as adult homes, enriched housing programs, or assisted living residences, provide a critical service for the elderly population, providing housing, food, care management, and assistance with all facets of life for their residents, including their personal care needs and assistance with medications. For low-income seniors and disabled individuals, SSI pays for all these services. Without the ACF living options, the majority of these low-income seniors will unnecessarily end up in costly nursing homes.

According to James Kane Jr., operating partner of Adirondack Manor HFA, which includes Valehaven, a substantial part of the residence'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 2007 increase was only the second increase in 25 years. Adirondack Manor used to operate 14 homes; following the closure of Valehaven, only six will remain.

"The rate is inadequate. We are simply unable to provide care and services 24-hours, seven-days per week for \$41 per day," said Kane. "We have been trying to hold on and keep the home open," he continued. "Unfortunately, Valehaven has 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 plan to the state Department of Health."

Lisa Clark, Valehaven's administrator for the past 9 years, saw the last of her residents depart the home on Wheeler Avenue Friday. She characterized the emotional toll and personal magnitude of the closure on residents, their families and staff, "There have been tears and sleepless nights. My residents and staff definitely had my heart and were like my own family – each and every one of them. I have given them all my number and address. I told them all I'm there to advocate for them if they need me."

"While the state SSI rate has remained frozen, per person costs for ACFs have skyrocketed," said Lisa Newcomb, executive director of the Empire State Association of Assisted Living (ESAAL). "As a result of financial losses, many of these homes have closed or face closure. In addition to Valehaven, dozens of SSI facilities have closed over the last several years – forcing low-income seniors to search for other care options."

Currently there is a measure A.6715B/S.6732 (Brindisi/Serino) in the state Legislature to increase the SSI rate by a total of \$20 per day. The measure received overwhelming support in the state Assembly and Senate and will soon be transmitted to the Governor for consideration.

“We need additional quality, affordable long-term care options today more than ever,” said Newcomb. “Without an increase in SSI, more residence doors will close and seniors across New York will be forced prematurely into nursing homes, threatening their independence and exponentially raising costs for the state.”

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