December XX, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul

Governor

NYS State Capitol

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

I am /We are writing you today to urge you to provide an immediate emergency Medicaid rate increase to New York’s nursing homes to enable nursing homes to staff their facilities appropriately and provide high-quality care for their residents. Older adults and people with disabilities who require long-term care and the providers that serve them have been impacted disproportionately by the pandemic. Yet, unlike most other states, New York has offered no financial support to nursing homes – instead, it imposed cuts. Today, our nursing homes are buckling under the worst staffing shortages in memory, exorbitant pandemic-driven costs, and years of inadequate reimbursement.

High-quality, non-profit and public nursing homes have been driven to a breaking point. They are being forced to turn away new admissions, close units, close their doors, or sell to for-profit operators, knowing that they cannot meet the needs of more residents without more staff and more resources. As you know, the crisis is creating a ripple effect in other health care sectors -- hospitals are unable to discharge patients who need home health care or skilled nursing facility care, and hospital beds are not available for patients who need acute care.

Older adults, people with disabilities, and the long-term care providers that serve them are counting on your administration to take bold action to support nursing homes battered by the pandemic. Health equity demands it. An *immediate* Medicaid rate increase would not only provide a lifeline to nursing homes and the residents who depend on them, it would also allow the State to leverage COVID-related enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage dollars for the benefit disproportionately impacted New Yorkers.

It is time for New York State to follow the lead of most other states and increase Medicaid reimbursement to nursing homes to recognize the exorbitant costs of fighting COVID. While federal support has been helpful, it has covered less than half of the financial impact of the pandemic on nursing homes. With existing Medicaid nursing home rates (which have not been adjusted for cost-of-living growth in 14 years), nursing homes simply cannot offer competitive compensation to recruit and retain the staff they need for skilled, sensitive, and highly demanding jobs.

Nursing homes and the residents in their care cannot wait until April 1 for financial support from the State. Some simply won’t be able to keep their doors open. I/We urge you to make the care of older adults and people with disabilities a top priority by directing an immediate emergency Medicaid rate increase to New York’s nursing homes.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.

Sincerely,

Senator/Assembly Member

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