

Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled

Testimony to the New York State Legislature

Joint Hearing of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees

THE 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

TOPIC: HEALTH/MEDICAID

Submitted by
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Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. The Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled (CIAD) strongly opposes the Executive Budget's repeal of the Enhanced Quality of Adult Living (EQUAL) Program. The budget ends the EQUAL grant program by eliminating new appropriations in the Aid to Localities and Capital Projects budgets and repealing SSL 461-s, the program's statutory basis, in the Health Article 7 bill (Part L). As a result, the elderly and persons with mental illness who comprise our adult care facility population will no longer benefit from the vital improvements to their quality of life that the program provides.

For more than 25 years, New York has provided additional state funds to aid low-income residents of Adult Care Facilities, who now number 13,000 people. In 1996, the New York State Legislature established the Quality Incentive Payment Program (QUIP), administered by the New York State Department of Health, to provide ACFs that housed SSI recipients with additional funds to support improvements in the residents' quality of life, care and services. In 2018, the Department of Health replaced QUIP with the EQUAL Program. It is a small non-competitive grants program that has cost the state only \$6.5 million annually for many years. Eligible facilities receive grant awards based upon their low-income populations.

These grants fund needed clothing allowances and recreational activities that directly benefit low-income residents and capital improvements to facilities that improve the physical plant beyond statutory minimums that benefit the common life of the entire resident community. The recent frigid temperatures we are now experiencing throughout the state underscores the need and benefit when a resident must replace a winter coat or winter boots that their monthly personal needs allowance is inadequate to cover. Or when residents need to replace their other garments lost or worn out in a facility's laundry.

EQUAL Program funds have been used to pay for air conditioners in resident rooms, non-Medicaid transportation and trips, staff training, and recovery & rehabilitative services to help residents become more independent. Residents use it to supplement their diets with fresh fruits and vegetables. Capital

improvement projects have funded washers and dryers for resident use, ice machines, ramps and outdoor patios and gardens.

In addition to the quality of life improvements the EQUAL Program provides, it also restores autonomy and choice to residents. Resident Councils have important powers over adult homes' EQUAL applications because they identify residents' top priorities and decide how the funds will be used thereby giving them agency, power and community in deciding on the improvements they want for themselves and their facilities. This insures that EQUAL funding is utilized for the best interests of the residents.

Established in 1973 to bring self-determination and purpose to residents of long-term care institutions, the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled (CIAD) has provided adult home residents with the information and skills they need to advocate for themselves for over 40 years. The focus of our educational, organizing, and advocacy programs is to help residents win back their autonomy, improve conditions in their homes and support their efforts to lead more independent lives integrated in the community.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or for more information.