



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Senator Griffo calls for increase in Personal Needs Allowance for residents of nursing homes, domestic violence victims

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 27, 2016

| ISSUE: **MEDICAID, PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE, NURSING HOMES, SENIORS**

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State Senator Joseph Griffo is calling for an increase in the monthly personal needs allowance that individuals in nursing homes are allowed to keep for their own expenses.

As the cost of living has constantly risen year after year, the personal needs allowance for nursing home residents who receive Medicaid has remained the same at \$50 since the early 1980s. This leaves many older adults with very little cash to spend out of pocket as they wish

on items like clothing, hobby materials, telephone calls, toiletries, gifts, books and magazines, snacks, television, Internet services, eyeglasses and other accessories.

On Wednesday, Senator Griffo, R-Rome, reiterated that he is cosponsoring legislation – [S2906A](#) – in the New York State Senate that would increase the existing personal needs allowance for individuals in nursing homes from \$50 to \$75, if they don't already receive any additional state or federal payments.

This bill, which is sponsored by Senator Kenneth LaValle, would also provide a monthly allowance of \$75 for individuals in residential programs for victims of domestic violence, who currently receive no such allowance.

The personal needs allowance is paid out of Medicaid, so this proposed increase is estimated to cost Medicaid approximately \$25 million in the first year. These allowances would further be adjusted each year to reflect the Consumer Price Index, according to the bill. The Senate bill has a companion bill sponsored in the State Assembly by Assemblyman Clifford Crouch, R-Bainbridge.

**Senator Griffo said:** “Like any of us, older adults have personal pleasures, hobbies and luxuries that they deserve to be able to spend their monthly income on to be happy. But because their out-of-pocket personal needs allowance hasn't gone up in years, what little money they do receive each month doesn't last very long, and that is unfortunate for individuals who have contributed so much to our society through their lives. Just because these individuals are now living in a residential facility doesn't mean they should be deprived of those personal items that would brighten their day or make their life more fulfilling.”

Concerning victims of domestic violence who are in a residential program, **Griffo added:** “When victims of domestic violence finally take steps to escape their abuse and seek

protection in a residential program, their main concern is personal safety. But as they move forward in this very difficult and challenging new phase of their life, it would be very helpful for these individuals to receive financial help to pay for essential items. This personal needs allowance would help lessen the struggle that domestic violence victims experience at a time when they are trying to put their lives back together.”

**Marie Goodman, an executive staff member at LutheranCare, said:** “The Personal Needs Allowance allows nursing home residents to pay for those little things that many of us take for granted – from a new pair of slippers and postage stamps, to haircuts and phone calls to loved ones. Depriving these residents of such items that affect their quality of life is no way to treat our elderly. I thank Senator Griffo for raising awareness concerning this important issue, and I urge the public to contact other state legislators encouraging them to support raising the Personal Needs Allowance.”

The New York State Health Facilities Association/New York State Center for Assisted Living (“NYSHFA”/“NYSCAL”) is a statewide association of providers of long term care services, caring for elderly, frail, and physically challenged women, men and children at over 350 skilled nursing and assisted living facilities throughout New York State. On Wednesday, NYSHFA/NYSCAL announced they are proud to join with Senator Griffo in supporting an increase in the personal needs allowance as set forth in the proposed Senate and Assembly bills:

**Stephen B. Hanse, Vice President & Counsel for Governmental Affairs of the New York State Health Facilities Association, said:** “A personal needs allowance is a small portion of a person’s monthly income that an individual keeps to pay for his or her personal expenses that are not covered by Medicaid. New York has not increased the personal needs allowance since the early 1980s. Moreover, the personal needs allowance does not take into account inflation. Other states have passed legislation to provide a higher personal needs allowance for

nursing home residents and it is time for New York to do the same so nursing home residents are able to better meet their basic expenses not covered by Medicaid. NYSHFA and NYSCAL look forward to continue working together with Senator Griffo and all the members of the Legislature in an effort to ensure that this necessary legislation becomes law.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2015-S2906A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor

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Increases the personal needs allowance of individuals in nursing homes and individuals in residential programs for victims of domestic violence

January 30, 2015

In Senate Committee **Finance**

Sponsored by **Kenneth P. LaValle**

Do you support this bill?