

Adult homes for elderly, disabled closing, face crunch

Legislators urge Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to sign bill to provide first hike in aid to adult home operators since 2007

ALBANY — Backers of a bill passed unanimously in the State Legislature that would provide more aid to operators of adult homes are pressing Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to sign the measure before more of the facilities — including those that house nearly 7,000 needy elderly and disabled on Long Island — face having to close.

Health-care costs have increased by 42 percent since 2007, which was the last increase in the rate paid to adult home operators per resident. Meanwhile workers' compensation costs to employers rose by 13 percent, according to the bill. The recent hike in the state minimum wage to \$15 also has boosted costs for adult homes.

After failing to get an increase in aid in state budget negotiations in 2016 with Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, the State Legislature is pressing Cuomo to sign a bill that the Senate and Assembly passed unanimously in June.

Adult home operators said a long overdue increase in aid is needed to keep their doors open. "New York's assisted living industry for low-income seniors is in crisis," said Harry Katz, owner and operator of the Echo Arms Adult Home in Port Jefferson Station. "The rate is inadequate. We are simply unable to provide care and services 24-hours, seven days per week for \$41 per day," said Katz.

Cuomo spokeswoman Dani Lever said this week that the bill was under review and declined further comment.

An administration official said the estimated cost of the bill when fully implemented would be \$100 million a year in the \$163 billion state budget.

Cuomo also has expressed concern about increasing funding for one housing program without providing similar increases for other state housing programs.

The 2007 increase was the only increase in the past 20 years, legislators said.

"Senior living houses deliver a valuable living experience for people who can't afford other housing," said State Sen. Kemp Hannon (R-Garden City), Health Committee chairman. "We feel it would be both a sharp increase in care for the individual and a logical option and the least costly alternative."

When an elderly or disabled New Yorker who qualifies for an adult home is denied a bed, he or she goes to a public nursing home where the cost to the government is several times higher than in an adult home.

Twenty adult homes in New York have closed in the last five years — seven in 2014 alone — because of fiscal stress, according to the bill's



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Harry Katz, owner & operator of the Echo Arms Adult Home in Port Jefferson Station The home currently houses 49 residents. Photo Credit: Rande Daddona.

sponsors. There are now 546 such homes statewide, including 37 in Nassau County and 51 in Suffolk.

"There is an unprecedented demand on Long Island for these services," Katz said.

Please Note: The information contained in this tear sheet is excerpted from Newsday (November 25, 2017). Subscribers can access the complete article at: <https://www.newsday.com/long-island/politics/cuomo-adult-homes-elderly-long-island-1.15151209>.