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GOVERNOR CUOMO'S VETO LEAVES THE CARE OF THOUSANDS OF ELDERLY NEW YORKERS IN QUESTION
Statement from Lisa Newcomb, Executive Director of the Empire State Association of Assisted Living

"The Governor's veto of legislation authorizing an increase in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rate has left thousands of low-income seniors statewide who are unable to live on their own, at risk of their safety or unnecessary placement into a nursing home. As a result, the Governor has turned his back on the most vulnerable of New York's elderly population. With a reimbursement rate which has been frozen for over 10 years, these seniors and their families are anxious and uncertain about their future. In effect, the assisted living option is being denied to them.

The simple fact is the state's SSI reimbursement rate of \$41 per day is grossly inadequate and, as a result, assisted living residences are closing at an alarming rate. Simply put, it is a safety net provider in crisis. In the past year alone, 13 adult homes have closed or announced that they are in the process of closing. Despite increases in the cost of goods and services, such as wages and health insurance, the current rate has not increased since 2007. Without even a modest adjustment to offset rising costs, operating these business has become financially unsustainable.

Adult care facilities (ACF), including adult homes, enriched housing programs, and assisted living residences, provide critical services for New York's elderly population. They provide housing, meals, care management and assistance with all facets of life for their residents, including their personal care needs and assistance with medications. For this low-income population, SSI is their only resource to pay for these services. ACFs can no longer make ends meet and are closing their doors at an alarming pace.

To add insult to injury, the Governor also vetoed legislation which establishes a fair and reasonable process which provides a pathway for allowing these facilities to receive Medicaid reimbursement for enhanced health care and personal care services. The Assisted Living Program (ALP), has proven to be a successful program which affords seniors in need of greater care to age in place at their their assisted living home instead of being forced into a higher level of care such as a nursing home. In vetoing legislation which establishes an open, reliable and objective process for the granting of ALP beds, the Governor has decided to continue to rely on a secretive, subjective and unpredictable "solicitation" process for granting ALPs. At worst, there may be no opportunity at all for qualified assisted living providers to offer ALP services.

Now, more than ever, the elderly need additional quality, affordable long-term care options. However, without a reasonable and responsible reimbursement rate, a measure that makes common- and fiscal-sense, more residences will close and seniors across New York either will be forced prematurely into more costly nursing homes, or receive substandard care.

Governor Cuomo's action creates a crisis for low-income New Yorkers who rely on assisted living services, rather than ensuring for the health, safety and protection of the elderly. The numbers of seniors that will need assisted living is growing exponentially. The state's approach is myopic and short sighted."