

**Testimony of Morningside Retirement and Health Services
Before the Joint Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature**

Human Services Budget Hearing for the Fiscal Year 2017-18

Honorable Catharine M. Young, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Honorable Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

Honorable Sue Serino, Chair Senate Committee on Aging
Honorable Donna Lupardo, Chair, Assembly Committee on Aging

Honorable Tony Avella, Chair, Senate Committee on Children & Families
Honorable Ellen Jaffee, Chair, Assembly Committee on Children & Families

Honorable James Tedisco, Chair, Senate Committee on Social Services
Honorable Andrew Hevesi, Chair, Assembly Committee on Social Services

**Submitted by Ron Bruno
February 16, 2017**

NORCs and Neighborhood NORCS

I have been the Executive Director of Morningside Retirement and Health Services (MRHS) since 1997. MRHS has been receiving NORC program funding from New York State since 1996, which has enabled us to build a program that meets the needs of a growing older population in our community. Thanks to NORC funding, MRHS has enabled hundreds of older adults to age in place these past twenty years. The NORC program model is unique in providing the kind of intense case management and healthcare management services that are required to make aging in place possible for frail, older adults.

Not only have we prevented the costly and unwanted institutionalization of older adults in nursing homes, but we have created a sense of “neighbor helping neighbor” and community responsibility, which are important hallmarks of NORC programs. We have found that the presence of a NORC program improves the quality of life for all residents in the NORC community, by providing opportunities for intergenerational engagement and volunteerism. Our community has embraced the values of the MRHS NORC program and we enjoy the support of residents of all ages. Just one example of this support is the free program and office space that the housing complex is currently providing as our primary space undergoes renovation.

In the FY 2016-2017 Enacted Budget, significant legislative changes were made to the NORC program, including expanding NORC definitions to include rural NORCs and allowing NORCs to receive up to \$200,000 and neighborhood NORCs to receive no less than \$60,000 to support programming. The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) has released a Request for Applications (RFA) for N/NORCS that reflect the statutory changes, but only plans to fund 12 classic NORCs and 12 neighborhood NORCs. There are currently 16 classic NORCs and 13 neighborhood NORCs supported by NYSOFA.

Without any changes, five existing NORC programs will be forced to close.

Governor Cuomo's FY 2017-2018 Executive Budget allocates \$2,027,500 for NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) and \$2,027,500 for Neighborhood NORCs (NNORCs). This eliminates the additional \$350,000 for NORCs and \$350,000 for Neighborhood NORCs that was included in the FY 2016-2017 Enacted Budget.

Furthermore, the RFA and the current budget allocation do not allow for expansion of the program, despite the fact that the legislation was updated last year with expansion in mind. Additional funding is vital to ensure that current NORCs can continue to provide services, particularly health care management services, and to grow the program to underserved areas with increasing aging populations.

Restoring \$700,000 from FY16-17 and investing an additional \$5.25 million in the N/NORC program (split evenly between the classic NORC and neighborhood NORC programs) will preserve the existing 29 NYSOFA-funded NORCs, and will allow for the creation of about 21 new NORCs across the State.