



**Testimony of Educational Alliance Co-op Village NORC  
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 Bonnie Lumagui  
NORCs and Neighborhood NORCS

As New Yorkers age, an increasing number of residents will require the special health and social services facilitated by Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood NORCs (NNORCs). Co-op Village NORC located on Lower East Side of Manhattan is an excellent example of a vital program and resource enabling low-middle income New Yorkers to age in place, thrive in their communities and delay hospitalization or nursing home placement.

Co-op Village NORC provides diverse programs and services that support a population that might otherwise fall through the cracks. As the director I see firsthand how, our program provides vital resources that seniors have come to rely on, including case management, socialization programs, transportation, and shopping assistance, as well as basic health services that allow seniors to remain in their homes, greatly improving their quality of life. The seniors we serve and our diverse partners play an active role in the development and implementation of our program. Our program continues to thrive after 20 years because we continuously develop and maintain our partnerships with housing, medical providers, transportation services, and much more. We are certain that the program has enabled hundreds of seniors to avoid nursing homes, illness, isolation and alienation while affording nearly all participants greater quality of life. We also have the ability to nimbly respond to emerging needs and crises, and this was never more evident or significant than in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, when we tended to the needs of many home-bound elderly, for whom we were, in many instances, the first and sometimes only source of support.

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 Classic 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

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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 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.

As our costs and number of seniors continue to rise, increased state funding is critical to meet the growing and diverse needs of our seniors. We are increasingly serving seniors as young as 60 years of age as well as those more than 100 years of age. Clearly, a range of programming is necessary for seniors along the age spectrum and the need to expand and diversify programming accordingly has caused a budgetary strain. As prime examples, younger seniors are seeking modern health and wellness programming including prevention activities while older seniors require intensive and individualized attention, including medical services.

Furthermore, the NYSOFA 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 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.

We are pleased to be a partner with New York State Office on Aging (NYSOFA) in operating the program and we look forward to working together to ensure that it remains strong and relevant far into the future.

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