



Visiting Nurse Service of New York
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**Testimony of Visiting Nurse Services of New York
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 Dan Lowenstein, Vice President of Government Affairs
February 16, 2017**

Increase funding for 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). These vital programs and resources help enable low-middle income New Yorkers age in place, thrive in their communities and delay hospitalization or nursing home placement.

N/NORCs¹ provide programs and services that support a group that might otherwise fall through the cracks. N/NORCs provide 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 Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) operates the Chinatown Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) NNORC, which covers a discrete territory, 24 blocks in the Chinatown area that houses over 2,000 low income immigrant seniors. We have reached over 1,100 seniors in our service area. This community, considered extremely low income by HUD standards, has "aged in place" over the last 50 years: 62% of our members are over 75 and 25% over 85 years of age. Of those members surveyed in 2014, 71% have a grade school or less education and 12% have no education at all; 75% do not speak English and

¹ N/NORC indicates both NORC and NNORC programs

of those who do, 22% do not speak it well. Most speak only Cantonese. Further, 84% cannot read or write English and 14% cannot read or write Chinese.

Navigating the health and social service world is a major challenge for our members who come to the Chinatown NNORC to receive social services, non-reimbursable health care, education, recreational activities and participate in support groups. NNORCs provide social work case management, case assistance and recreational services aimed at promoting successful aging in place for the healthy senior, as well as those who require help and assistance. Additional requirements by NYSOFA regarding staffing requirements for NNORC nursing has stretched the budget enormously. However, we view NNORC nursing as a critical service, especially for our community with poor language skills and low literacy. The NNORC nurse is a bridge for seniors to understand how the complicated health care system works, provide access to needed care, promote healthy aging and wellness and educate seniors on the appropriate use of health care services. All these efforts are aimed at reducing emergency room care and avoidable hospitalizations while increasing positive health outcomes and resident satisfaction.

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 and \$2,027,500 for NNORCs. This eliminates the additional \$350,000 for NORCs and \$350,000 for NNORCs 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 NNORC 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.

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