

# Testimony for the New York Senate Health and Mental Hygiene Committee

## On Restoring Budget Funds for Health and Mental Hygiene Budget

Sen. Krueger and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly Health and Mental Health Committees, thank you for the opportunity to address you today about the urgent necessity to restore budget funds once again removed by the Executive in the proposed budget bill. We submit this testimony on behalf of the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled, Mobilization for Justice, resident councils and adult home residents from across New York State.

We strongly oppose the elimination of: 1) the Capital and Local funds of the EQUAL grant program; 2) the Adult Home Advocacy Project and the Adult Home Resident Council Project; and 3) ---- funding for the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled These programs provide vital resources to improve the quality of life and care for those living in adult care facilities across New York State.

**Restore full funding of \$6.6 million to the EQUAL grant program**, which provides vital resources to improve the quality of life and care for those living in adult care facilities across New York State. Local Assistance funding \$3.3 million; Capital Improvement funding \$3.3 million.

We strongly oppose the Executive Budget's repeal of the Enhanced Quality of Adult Living (EQUAL) Program. The budget ends the EQUAL grant program by eliminating new appropriations in the Aid to Localities and Capital Projects budgets and repealing SSL 461-s, the program's statutory basis in the Health Article 7 bill (Part S). As a result, people with mental and chronic physical illnesses who comprise our adult care facility population will no longer benefit from the vital improvements to their quality of life that the program provides. For more than 25 years, New York has provided additional state funds to aid low-income residents of adult care facilities. In 1996, the New York State Legislature established the Quality Incentive Payment Program (QUIP), administered by the New York State Department of Health, to provide adult care facilities that housed SSI/SSP recipients with additional funds to support improvements in the residents' quality of life, care and services. Local Assistance budget funds are used by residents to purchase much needed clothing, fresh food, essential personal items and enrichment activities that residents cannot otherwise afford. Capital funding allows residents to work with home operators to improve the physical plant beyond statutory minimums in a way which benefits the common life of the entire resident community.

The EQUAL Program restores autonomy and choice to residents. Resident Councils have important powers over adult homes' EQUAL applications because they identify residents' top priorities and decide how the funds will be used. This gives residents agency, power and building community as they prioritize the improvements they want for themselves and their facilities. This ensures that EQUAL funding is utilized for the best interests of the residents. Once again, we are asking the New York State Legislature, which has championed these vulnerable New Yorkers in past elimination of this critical funding, to restore the \$6.6 million in EQUAL funding.

**Restore \$230,000 for the New York State Justice Center** to support legal and lay advocacy for adult home residents in the five boroughs of New York City and Suffolk County, ensuring these residents have access to representation and support when they need it most. For decades, the state budget has included \$230,000 in funding through the ***Adult Home Advocacy Project and the Adult Home Resident Council Project*** which is shared by the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled (CIAD), Mobilization for Justice, and two additional non-profits serving Long Island.

Together we conduct Resident Rights Trainings for residents annually to assist residents in resolving hundreds of individual complaints. Over the past year, the most common items brought by the project participants to the Department of Health include:

- Concern over management interference with the operations of Resident Councils.
- Food quality and nutrition for aging residents especially those in need of diets to meet health care issues such as diabetes, cardiac and blood pressure concerns, and the infrequent of sufficient fresh fruits and vegetable.
- Emergency preparedness with resident, safety and security, and quality of facilities.
- Ensuring the EQUAL grant process is resident driven.

In the past year alone, this funding has allowed our organizations to provide 84 resident rights trainings, to train 1431 residents, and to respond to requests for support from over 2,500 residents.

The administrative memo supporting this cut asserts: *“The Adult Home Advocacy and Adult Home Resident Council programs were established in 1995. Since that time, the Department of Health has established similar programs to support individuals residing in adult homes. To promote efficiency, this bill would consolidate these efforts by eliminating the Adult Home Advocacy and Adult Home Resident Council programs.”* With all due respect, this is inaccurate. The Department of Health has **not** established any programs that are similar to the Adult Home Advocacy Project and the Adult Home Resident Council Project. More generally, the statement implies that the State has implemented other services that render this funding unnecessary. As providers in adult care facilities every

day, we have not seen or heard of additional resources allocated for adult home residents or resident council support. In defunding this critical advocacy activity, decades of efforts to promote resident rights and ensure justice for this highly vulnerable population will be lost and residents will lose further confidence in the regulatory oversight by the State. We recommend that the legislature reference the report by the NY State Comptroller's Office issued in July 2025 which underscores the need for stronger oversight of adult care facilities. See <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sqa-2025-23s34.pdf>.

**Restore funding for the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled** in both the Executive budget at \$75,000 and Legislative add of \$150,000 to safeguard the voices and well-being of some of our state's most at-risk populations. In 2022 CIAD's funding was reduced from \$250,000 to \$150,000 in the Legislative portion which has severely impacted our ability to respond to resident councils and residents in homes in challenging homes to organize resident councils and promote resident autonomy and participation in the day-to-day realities of their homes.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program acts as mediator between residents in nursing homes and some adult homes, this work focuses on resolving individual complaints with home operators. However, no government agency or non-profit works with residents to organize themselves to find solutions through collective action in the way that CIAD does. As a peer empowerment nonprofit, the voices of our constituents are represented in our staff as Peer Advocates and as members of our Board of Directors. CIAD is the unique platform for these voices. If these cuts are approved by the legislature, the Coalition for Institutionalized Aged and Disabled will no longer be able to provide the advocacy and training services which are so critical to older adults with health, mental health and intellectual disabilities.

In short, CIAD and our extensive resources which we provide for free to resident councils, families and other advocacy groups across New York State will simply cease to exist. Up until now, the residents of adult homes have been able to count on the support of Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled (CIAD) and Mobilization for Justice, in our work with the NYS Justice Center to advocate for their human rights, basic needs and social justice. This is not the place or time for the Administration to make cuts to these essential and cost-effective initiatives that give encouragement and trusted and reliable support to people who are already very frightened that they will not have what they need to maintain their mental and physical health and success in living in the community.

We urge you to prioritize the restoration of these critical budget items in the upcoming fiscal year. Thank you for your attention and for your unwavering dedication to the most vulnerable of our New York State communities.

For more information, please contact:

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