



**New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc**  
*Improving The Lives of Senior Citizens & Families in NY State*  
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**Testimony of Peg Graham  
Manhattan Resident  
Volunteer, NY State Wide Senior Action Council  
Manhattan Budget Forum, NY Academy of Medicine  
Saturday, February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2pm-5pm**

I am Peg Graham, a resident in State Senator Krueger's district and a volunteer with the New York StateWide Senior Action Council. As budget discussions heat up in the coming weeks, there are a number of concerns that I wish to share. Let's start with the Medicaid budget.

It should be of no surprise to the state that LTC Services and Support costs are growing at a rate in excess of 3%. This should have been addressed and planned for in past budgets. Instead, the Governor cynically places the counties at risk. We are concerned that counties will feel squeezed, resorting to enrollment delays and inappropriate denials of care, feeling that they simply can't place a burden on local property taxpayers. And they shouldn't. No county, and no county tax base, has the wherewithal to deal with the major underlying reason for the growth in LTCSS costs: the demographic changes that are underway. We all know that we have a growing population of older adults that need assistance – at the same time that there is a diminishing number of family caregivers available to help them.

The Governor has appointed a small group of advisors, mostly representatives of the health care industry, to serve on a new Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT.) If you think we object to that, you are right. We do. We know that if the Legislature rejects the MRT proposals, the Legislature has to find \$2.5 billion or more in savings (cuts) before passing a budget, or the Governor empowers the state division of the budget and the Commissioner of Health to make across the board cuts. This is a very cynical budget ploy, again failing to address the underlying demographic challenge. Rather than either of those scenarios, envision a process that incorporates consumers as key participants in any redesign, particularly when it comes to Long Term Care.

We urge you to push back at all of this. Put consumers first. Educate the Governor on how ill-considered his hardball tactics are. evaluate the efficacy of a Medicaid global spending cap. Reject the proposal to require the counties to once again pay a local share, and instead, help our state recognize the true reason for this gap: a demographic change that needs to be acknowledged. Be open to raising revenues. There is a list of reasonable revenue-producing proposals from Budget Justice for New York – use that list.

As importantly, as you engage in this larger battle, we ask you to not lose sight of specific consumer-facing initiatives that you have historically supported. You know that some of us are fortunate to be able to manage aging, health and finances - but many are not. They depend on

others to help them navigate the crazy quilt of healthcare delivery and financial assistance. You, our state legislators, have historically made sure that the following two programs are adequately funded and we ask you to make sure of that again in this very challenging year.

The first, NY StateWide Senior Action Council's **Patients Rights Helpline**, is a vital component in StateWide's services for seniors across the state. The helpline handles over 500 cases a year counseling seniors on medical problems that arise in and outside of hospitals. It deals with problems that involve their rights as patients, Medicare and Medicaid recipients, and other related problems. It helped alert StateWide to the growing crisis in the shortage of home health care workers. We in turn, share this information with you, the Legislators. It is for these reasons that the legislature needs to once again allocate \$100,000 (supplementing the Governor's \$31,500) to allow the Patients Right Helpline to continue its important work. As importantly, please re-appropriate last year's \$100,000, held up this past year by delays in contracting. (The appropriate legislation is S 7503/A 9503, page 8 line 27-30.)

The other important program is the **Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program**. The monies in this program are divided among six organizations including StateWide. The funding has been the same since the 2015-2016 budget - we need to keep up with inflation and the aforementioned growing number of senior citizens in New York State. Please provide \$1M in this year's budget for this program, of which about \$ 200,399 would go to StateWide to cover the costs incurred by counseling seniors through the helpline. (The appropriate legislation is S 7503/A 9503, page 7 line 30-49.)

In an unrelated but matter important to retired State and County workers, the Governor is again trying to cap the reimbursement for Medicare premiums. This proposal is very damaging to retired state and county workers particularly at a time when the rate of inflation in the health care industry is twice the national average. I would recommend rejecting Senate bill S 7505 and assembly bill A 9505 parts U, S, and V.

On behalf of the Statewide Senior Action Council, I thank you for your time and attention.

# STATE WIDE

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**Testimony of  
Mario C. Henry, President  
Board of Directors  
New York StateWide Senior Action Council**

**Manhattan Budget Forum  
NY Academy of Medicine  
1216 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY**

**Saturday, February 29th  
2pm to 5pm**

I am Mario C Henry President of the Board of Director's of New York State Wide Senior Action Council. I am submitting this statement concerning the state budget in lieu of an appearance.

NY State Wide Senior Action Council **Patients Rights Helpline** is a vital component in the service State Wide provides for seniors in this state. The helpline handles over 500 cases a year counseling seniors on medical problems that arise in and outside of hospitals. It deals with problems that involve their rights as patients, medicare and medicaid recipients, and other related problems.

The Helpline does more than that tough. It acts as the canary in the coal mine. It provides vital information to State Wide on problems facing seniors in the state. It helped alert State Wide to the problem of " Under Observation " as opposed to " Admitted " status in hospitals and the financial burden that can create. It helped alert State Wide to the growing crisis in the shortage of home health care workers.

It is for these reasons that the legislature bring the funding for the helpline to the level that it was in last year's budget of \$ 131,500. **As in previous years the Governor has allotted only \$ 31,500 for the helpline. In previous years the legislature has added an additional \$ 100,000. It is critical that the legislature do the same this year.**

It is also necessary to **reappropriate last year's \$ 100,000** do to delays in contracting. **The appropriate legislation is S 7503/A 9503 page 8 line 27-30.**

The other source of funding for State Wide's counseling services largely done through the helpline is the **Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program**. The monies in this program are divided among six organizations including State Wide. The funding has been the same since the 2015-2016 budget and State Wide is proposing an **increase of one million dollars of which about \$ 200,399 would go to State Wide**. The additional funding is needed to deal with inflation and the growing need among the ever enlarging senior citizen population in New York State. **The appropriate legislation is S 7503/A 9503 page 7 line 30-49.**

In an unrelated but matter important to retired State and County workers, **the Governor is again trying to cap the reimbursement for medicare premiums**. This proposal is very damaging to retired state and county workers particularly at a time when the rate of inflation in the health care industry is twice the national average. **I would recommend rejecting Senate bill S 7505 and assembly bill A 9505 parts U,S, and V.**

That concludes by presentation and I want to thank you for this opportunity