

Testimony of St. Nicks Alliance
Before the New York State Senate Standing Committees on Aging, Health, & Labor
Senator Rachel May, Chair, Standing Committee on Aging
Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chair, Standing Committee on Health
Senior Jessica Ramos, Chair, Standing Committee on Labor

Homecare Workforce – Challenges and Solutions

St. Nicks Alliance serves over 17,000 low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. We provide elder care services as well as affordable housing, workforce development and services to youth and education. We thank the NYS Senate Joint Committee of Aging, Health and Labor for this hearing on the critically important issue of wages for home care and assisted living workers as we face the most severe shortage of workers since NYC and NYS began to provide home care services.

Community Based Non-Profit Licensed Home Care (LHCSA)

St. Nicks Alliance is amongst a network of community-based non-profits providing services under its Licensed Home Care Agency (LHCSA) and additional NYS licensures. The LHCSA license services are the backbone of a broad network of complimenting Elder Care services that provide key elements of a continuum of care for the elderly and frail elderly including Assisted Living, Independent Living, Housing with Support, Adult Day Health Care, Home Delivered Meals, Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC), Senior Transport Services and Senior Social Centers. Over the past several years as a result of MRTII, the nonprofit community-based organizations are under severe financial and stress complicated by worker shortage.

We are a member of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) as well as the new Community Based Home Care Working Group and Empire State Assisted Living.

Developing a New Community Based Value Proposition Several high achieving non-profit home care organizations; which call themselves the Community Based Homecare Working Group have joined together and seek to strengthen community-based home health care network to meet the challenges of providing high quality, economically viable care within the broad public/private healthcare delivery system. Today's healthcare delivery system is extremely complex and subject to major forces of titanic proportions. Nevertheless, the non-profit sector has a dual role that reflects our understanding of client needs, through advocacy. Moreover, non-profit home care providers have championed the cause of social justice and specifically, advocating for home care workers and fair compensation. We have led the way in efforts to set the path for improved mandated compensation, investment in skill training and

strengthened overall professionalism towards the goal of elevating the home care worker, as an integral part of the interdisciplinary team.

Growth in Demand

Make Caring Pay While the demand for long term care (LTC) services continues to grow and is well documented in demographic analysis and long-term trends, the number of home care workers continues to decline. NYS's long term care focus has been largely about reducing cost and has been especially focused on long term care. Long term care has borne deeper cuts despite the growing need for these services. For example, NYS implemented 1% across the board cut in rates with no complimenting reduction in expenses. An additional 1% cut has been proposed. Similarly, NY State has not invested in community care. St. Nicks Alliance recommends the following steps towards addressing the long-term goal of strengthening the home care workforce need:

1. **Fair Pay for Home Care Workers:** When NYS raised the minimum wage there were unintended consequence that adversely affected Home Care. Home Care workers are trained, skilled and experienced. Since the minimum wage for untrained workers has risen, we must create a fair pay for Home Care workers. Thus, we support the (Fair Pay for Home Care S5374/A6329) legislation introduced by Assemblyman Richard Gottfried and State Senator Rachel May.
2. **Create Opportunity Through Training:** Increase training for Home Care workers and align PCA, CNA and HHA training to create a stackable career ladder for home care workers. NYS should expand funding for these trainings to create a pipeline of workers for work in the caring healthcare profession. Further, by reorganizing certification NYS will create opportunity for growth.
3. **Eliminate the 24-hour Rule:** Several years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that 24 hours pay in home service required full compensation without allowance for sleep period. NYS policy was adjusted to be technically compliant. However, home care organizations must provide 24-hour coverage in back to back care workers in 12-hour coverage. NYS has not adjusted its compensation leaving home care companies with the threat of growing financial burden. We recommend elimination of the 24-hour rule to be replaced by fully funded complimentary 12-hour shifts.
4. **Fairly Fund Long Term Care for Home Care and Community-Based Services.** In the effort to control costs, NYS created an artificial Global Cap on Medicaid budget which has disproportionately harmed home care and led to an across the board cut. Further, NYS Medicaid MRTII redesign has been similarly oriented towards cuts in long term care. We recommend restoration of those cuts including elimination of the 1% across the board cut.

We ask that NYS look for innovation in Long Term Care and use its 1115 waiver and DSRIP funding to enable community-based providers to innovate in providing compassionate, cost effective services with measured outcomes for the elderly.

Nonprofit organizations have played a critical role in vaccinating seniors in our community and address food shortage during quarantine. Similarly, we adapt to change and will continue to adapt to provide quality cost-effective care at home in communities where seniors strongly prefer to access services.