



Testimony on the 2018-2019 Executive  
Budget Proposal – Housing

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Governor’s proposed Executive Budget for 2018-2019. My name is Sandy Myers and I’m the Vice President of External Relations and Communications at Selfhelp Community Services.

Selfhelp was founded in 1936 to help those fleeing Nazi Germany maintain their independence and dignity as they struggled to forge new lives in America. Today, Selfhelp has grown into one of the largest not-for-profit human service agencies in the New York metropolitan area, with 27 sites throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Nassau County. Selfhelp provides a broad set of important services to more than 20,000 elderly, frail, and vulnerable New Yorkers each year, while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America. Selfhelp offers a complete network of community-based home care, social service, and senior housing programs with the overarching goal of helping clients to live with dignity and avoid institutionalization.

All our services are rooted in the idea that all individuals deserve to age with independence and dignity. Our services include: specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; ten affordable senior housing complexes; four Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs; three case management programs; five senior centers including one of New York City’s first Innovative Senior Centers; home health care and home health aide training; client centered technology programs including the Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship programs; and the Selfhelp Alzheimer’s Resource Program (SHARP).

### **Affordable Senior Housing as a Tool for Healthcare**

Selfhelp believes that the best outcomes for older adults are achieved when social services support client health. With the support of JPMorgan Chase, we recently conducted a study of the residents in our senior affordable housing program. We compared Medicaid data for residents in our housing in two zip codes and compared it to other seniors living in the same zip codes over two years. We found the following:

- 68% lower odds of Selfhelp residents being hospitalized
- \$1,778 average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization for Selfhelp residents, versus \$5,715 for the comparison group
- 53% lower odds of a Selfhelp resident visiting an emergency room compared to a non-Selfhelp resident

Selfhelp’s ten affordable residences offer seniors the opportunity to lead independent lives in their homes and communities. At each of our buildings, we offer the Selfhelp Active Services for the Aging Model (SHASAM), which makes available social work services, education, and recreation, as well as access to skilled nursing and home care, if and when requested by the resident.

We believe that housing plus services is the right model to ensure that seniors are able to thrive as they age in their communities. As a next step to the State’s investment in senior housing capital funding in last year’s budget, we are urging the State to create a senior housing resident

coordinator program. In coordination with LeadingAge NY, Enterprise Community Partners, LiveOn NY, and other housing providers and advocates, Selfhelp supports a \$10 million allocation over five years to establish funding for social workers in new and existing affordable senior housing. This \$10 million would be accessible to senior housing providers across New York State, including New York City.

Service coordination includes an array of services that assist residents to remain independent by emphasizing wellness and healthy aging. This will result in a savings to the Medicaid program by keeping low-income seniors out of more costly levels of care such as assisted living or nursing homes.

**Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this year’s budget, and specifically on the importance of affordable senior housing options throughout New York State