

NY State Senior Affordable Housing Program

Living at home with dignity and wellness support

The Silver Tsunami is no longer way off shore – it is right on the horizon. We must act now to address the housing crisis for New York State’s low income senior population – before it is too late.

We have known for years that the Baby Boom generation would grow old. Now, with this population boom upon us, our existing housing stock is unprepared to meet the increasing need, in terms of affordability, accessibility and services. **New York State must make a substantial investment in new and existing senior housing, with necessary services, in order to address the growing need for affordable rental apartments for low-income seniors.**

- In 1990, there were 20 million households aged 65 and up; by 2010, this number had grown to 25.8 million, and by 2030, aging Baby Boomers will expand the number of senior households to 46 million, according to the Urban Institute. The number of senior renters nationally is expected to more than double, from 5.8 million in 2010, to 12.2 million in 2030 (UI).
- The HUD Section 202 program, which for decades was the go-to program for nonprofit developers of affordable housing for seniors, has essentially been discontinued, and now only exists as renewals of existing rental assistance contracts. There have been no new 202 capital advances for five years.
- A tremendous number of seniors across the state are severely rent burdened. In New York City, more than 65% of senior households paid more than 50% of their income for rent.
- The Urban Institute, the Bi-Partisan Policy Center, and the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, have all recently published reports about the importance of addressing the growing need for senior housing and related services.

As our population ages, **health, wellness and social engagement** in senior housing is critical to ensuring that seniors can age safely at home, while avoiding unnecessary entrance into more costly institutional settings.

- **Senior Housing With Services** allows seniors to live independently while accessing modest assistance accessing necessary services, usually through a resident service coordinator. *Housing With Services* for seniors is a very different model than *supportive housing*, which usually provides for intensive services.
- Senior housing communities provide social interaction that improves quality of life and allows seniors to age in their homes with dignity and independence. Meals, transportation, laundry, housekeeping, security, emergency response, and resident assistance are all examples of services that may be offered as part of senior housing, all of which contribute to greater independence.
- Residents are moving into senior housing buildings later in life. They are older, frailer, staying longer, and have significantly greater health needs than years ago, due to advanced age.
- Service coordinators, also known as resident advisors, have generated substantial savings in state and federal funds by helping seniors to stay healthy in their homes. Service coordinators, who connect seniors to appropriate services, can reduce unnecessary hospitalizations, trips to emergency rooms, and nursing home placements.
- Seniors have fewer family supports than in the past. Adult children of seniors are more likely than ever to live great distances from aging parents. Shifts in the economy have caused families to move to other regions, forcing many seniors to rely on resources in their communities.

New York State should create and fund a new *Statewide Senior Affordable Housing Program* that will support independent living with dignity and combat social isolation for New York's rapidly growing low-income elder population.

***Capital:* Appropriate \$50M per year for five years, to provide \$100,000 per unit for 500 units, which developers will combine with other capital funding sources to accelerate development of affordable rentals for seniors.**

NYS Homes and Community Renewal has traditionally allocated Low Income Housing Tax Credits and other resources to be used for the development of senior housing. But the elimination of the HUD 202 program has caused the number of senior units being developed in New York each year to be drastically reduced. A new capital source will encourage developers to apply for other sources of housing capital, and will provide incentives to move forward with senior housing projects. By allocating an average of \$100,000 per unit, the new program would combine well with 4% bond credits, reducing the necessity of more competitive 9% credits.

***Rental Assistance:* Create and fund a rental assistance component of the Senior Affordable Housing Program, at a cost of \$4.5 million, for 500 units, over 5 years.**

Senior households in all parts of the state are severely cost burdened. Developers in some communities choose to develop mixed income properties that serve seniors at varying income ranges. But in many neighborhoods in New York City, as well as urban, suburban and rural communities upstate and on Long Island, most seniors cannot afford rents set at 60% of median income, the standard for Housing Tax Credit developments. Rental assistance is necessary to allow developers to serve seniors at 30% of area median income, the level of households relying solely on social security plus small pensions.

***Service Coordination:* Appropriate \$10 million for the Resident Advisor Program, to enhance service coordination in existing and new senior housing that includes an array of services that assist residents to remain independent by emphasizing wellness and healthy aging.**

New York State Elder Law includes a provision (Section 220) that authorizes NYS Office for Aging (NYSOFA) to operate the Resident Advisor Program. Funding this program will support an expansion of service coordinators in new and existing affordable senior housing developments throughout the state. It will ensure that all new developments created under this initiative include a full array of services that allow residents to remain in their homes as they grow older and frailer.

Service coordinators, also known as resident advisors, have for years helped elderly residents navigate complicated social service bureaucracies. As our population ages and more people choose to remain at home, coordinators play a critical role in helping residents live healthy, vibrant lives in the homes of their choice.

Resident Advisors maintain regular contact with residents and their families and facilitate linkages to community partner agencies that provide health and social services. Advisors promote health and wellness by encouraging residents to make good choices about eating, exercise, social interaction, and wellness, allowing them to remain living at home.

Support healthy aging of New York State's elder population by making these strategic investments to build and sustain affordable senior housing in all parts of New York State!