RE: SUPPORT an SSI Increase

Dear Assemblymember:

New York State has many providers who provide quality care to individuals whose only source of income is Social Security Supplemental Income (SSI). These Adult Care Facilities provide care for the neediest individuals those with mental illness, physical frailties and those without a family support system. Adult Care Facilities have been impacted by rising costs such as minimum wage increase, health insurance premiums for staff and inflation costs of food. However, the SSI rate has remained frozen for the past 10 years at $41.00 per day. As a result, many of the SSI facilities can no longer handle these financial losses and have been forced to close their doors.

The Assembly One-House Budget proposal for SFY 2019-20 includes a provision that would require a rate adequacy study for ACFs that provide enhanced residential care and the personal needs allowance of individuals receiving such care and requires OTDA to issue recommendations once the study is completed. I want to thank you for your continued attention to this issue, as the Assembly has passed legislation in prior years to increase SSI, but we need your support to do more to ensure that low-income seniors can access the care and services they need while remaining in the least restrictive setting.

The Legislature has recognized the importance of this issue, having unanimously passed legislation in 2017 to increase the SSI rate to adult care facilities, (See S.6732/A.6715-B). In vetoing this much needed legislation, the Governor stated the following:

“While I fully support the objectives underlying these bills, the proposed increases are not supported by any identifiable funding source. Collectively, these bills would add hundreds of millions of dollars in increased and unbudgeted costs to the State’s budget, which will ultimately be shouldered by the State’s taxpayers. Decisions impacting the scope and efficacy of Medicaid funding, both in terms of revenue available and appropriations to be expended, have always been, and should continue to be, addressed in the context of annual budget negotiations. At a time when the Federal Government has enacted, and is threatening additional, devastating cuts to the State’s health care system, it would be irresponsible to incur such unbudgeted costs outside of that process. For these reasons, I am constrained to veto these bills. As part of the budget process, I am directing the Department of Health to work with stakeholders and the Legislature to address concerns related to the scope and adequacy of reimbursement to health care providers.” Veto Message No. 241 (2017)

I ask you to continue to work with your colleagues in the Assembly to ensure that an SSI increase is included in the final SFY 2019-20 enacted Budget and to advance legislation to establish an adequate SSI rate as the Assembly did in 2017 and hold the Governor to his word. Senate Bill S.2601 provides for an incremental SSI increase over several years and it has passed through the Senate Committee on Social Services. The Senate One-House proposal also includes an SSI increase of $4 per day. I urge the Assembly to introduce and advance legislation to do the same.

The last time there was an increase paid to the State supplement, it was 2007. Please do not let another year go by without an SSI increase. Thank you,