



ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK FAMILY COUNCILS

Supporting Nursing Home Residents

Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried
242 West 27th Street
New York, NY 10001

Dear Assemblyman Gottfried:

I am writing this letter in support of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP). I don't know if you have ever had a relative residing in a nursing home, but all of our family council members have. It is a very lonely feeling and we wonder: are we doing the right thing by our loved one? Do we really understand conflict management? Who can support us with our individual issues? The more we have learned about nursing homes and the dynamics of those facilities, the more we have come to realize that we as a group can only address systemic issues in the home; we cannot get involved with individual needs or problems. When we try to address individual issues the administration cuts us off by citing HIPAA and other regulations. In such cases only the Ombudsman in our facilities, who is empowered to act on behalf of individuals, can be an effective advocate for our family members. But what happens if one of our facilities does not have an Ombudsman? Families are left to drift without direction for months, and often years. Yes, lawyers and doctors and other professionals may know how to maneuver and make deals with the nursing staff or the administration, but what about the rest of us?

New York State has more nursing home residents than any other state in the country, yet is ranked 45th in funding for its Ombudsman Program. The New York State contribution to the LTCOP is 8%, compared to the 40% national average. Presently New York has allocated \$680,000 to support the LTCOP, which serves approximately 140,000 residents. Additionally, legislation was enacted in October 2004 making hundreds of assisted living facilities and family-type homes the responsibility of the LTCOP, but the necessary funding was never provided.

Where are we left, considering the inability of the LTCOP to make ombudsmen available to each of our nursing homes, or to provide enough ombudsmen to large facilities that need more than one? We find ourselves fighting a losing battle with these institutions because we don't have the knowledge and the expertise to navigate the complex rules and regulations of the state and the federal government, not to mention the often-intimidating structure of the nursing home.

Please, support an increase of the LTCOP funding from the state. An extra \$3.5 million dollars would bring state funding up to the national average. Help us to provide our loved ones dignity and an acceptable quality of life.

Respectfully,

Gilbert Sabater
Family Member