



**ALLIANCE FOR LOW-INCOME PERSONAL CARE HOME
ADVANCEMENT**

**Joint Informational Meeting of the House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee &
House Human Services Committee Testimony on
Personal Care Homes and Assisted Living Residences
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Good Morning Chairman Kim, Chairman Mentzer, Chairman Kinsey and Chairman Heffley. Thank you for the opportunity to provide brief comments at today's hearing.

My name is Cynthia Gartman and I work as the convenor of ALPHA, which stands for the Alliance for Low-Income Personal Care Homes Advancement. ALPHA is a young, collaborative statewide organization that promotes the sustainability of low-income personal care homes through volunteerism, advocacy, partnerships, and business mentoring.

We are very grateful that, last year, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania allocated a \$20 million increase to supplemental security income rates for low-income personal care home residents – the first such increase in 16 years. In addition, Pennsylvania allocated \$26.7 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to assisted living and personal care homes as well. Pennsylvania also allocated ARPA funds to SSI personal care homes in 2021.

We know first-hand from providers that with the increased cost of food and utilities over the last year, they would not have been able to stay in business if it were not for these increases.

For purposes of this discussion, the numbers included in my testimony are current through August 2023.

For background, if a Pennsylvania resident is in the hospital, they must have a "Safe Discharge" location, a term defined by the Federal Government that indicates a place with the correct supportive services for that person's healthcare and living needs. Many patients are discharged to their homes. Others are discharged to a nursing home or rehabilitation services.

Many of these patients don't require nursing home-level care. They may need a little extra help with things like medications, bathing, grocery shopping or meal preparation. This is the vital



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service that Personal Care Homes and Assisted Living Residences provide in the healthcare landscape.

There are currently very limited financial supports for individuals who do not need skilled care - but lack the ability to live without assistive services. So, what happens when a patient is extremely low-income? There is a small Federal SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and State supplement that is called the SSI Supplement.

In Pennsylvania, since 2008, the number of Personal Care Homes that accept the SSI Supplement has fallen across the state from **894 to currently 416, a loss of 478 homes that accept the SSI Supplement or 53%**. From a resident perspective, the number of residents on the SSI Supplement dropped from 8,776 in 2008 to 4,105 in August 2023 – a decrease of 4,671 residents or a 53% drop in SSI recipients.

But even this number doesn't tell the full story. The total number of homes that accept the Supplement in PA is currently 416, but the number of homes where the majority of the licensed beds are dedicated to serving this population, we suspect, is closer to 300. For instance, on the official PA reporting, there are 36 SSI Homes in Philadelphia, when we know the actual dedicated SSI Home number to be 29.

7 in Cumberland County – there are currently none.

9 in Dauphin County – there is one, currently (Paxton Street Ministries).

25 in Lancaster County – there are 11, currently.

Let's look at this scenario: A low-income patient in a Pennsylvania hospital is ready to be discharged. They could have a Safe Discharge:



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- 1) back home to live independently,
- 2) to a Skilled Nursing Facility, or
- 3) to a Personal Care Home or Assisted Living Residence that accepts the SSI Supplement.

* If a PCH/ALR cannot be located that accepts the SSI Supplement, that patient will likely stay in the hospital until a safe discharge is established. Many of these patients remain in the hospital for weeks and months on end – what we call Long-Length of Stay. The financial impacts of these costs are borne by all Pennsylvanians and reverberate throughout our healthcare system.

Pennsylvania's portion of the SSI Supplement is now \$20.44 per day. This is far below any other per diem paid into the healthcare/senior care system to support our most vulnerable patients. To maintain this vital link to our long-term care system, we respectfully request the General Assembly and the Shapiro Administration consider these options:

- 1) Increasing the SSI Supplement;
- 2) Adding an additional sum to increase the Personal Needs Allowance for SSI recipients – the current rate is \$85 per month; and
- 3) Adding a COLA to the State Supplement.

We would be glad to work with the Committee and your colleagues in the General Assembly to craft specific solutions that better support this vulnerable population.

Saving personal care homes allows us to maintain a critical, and less expensive, link to our long-term care system. Taking care of our most vulnerable family, friends and neighbors is both a moral and financial imperative for all of us.



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Thank you for the opportunity to present today and for your ongoing leadership on this issue. I've attached some additional information and graphs as background. Please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions.