

Hochul should focus more on nursing homes

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Recently Gov. Kathy Hochul announced a proposed "inflation refund" check for New Yorkers —\$300 to single taxpayers making up to \$150,000 per year and \$500 to joint filers making up to \$300,000.

This refund would be funded by about \$3 billion in sales tax revenue. In short, because the price of goods and services are so high in New York State, several billion dollars of additional revenue have been generated this fiscal year.

While I applaud Hochul's efforts I would suggest fully funding nursing home Medicaid rates to help recruit and retain staff.

With an investment in Medicaid, the more than 155,000 nursing home employees in New York State would be lifted up with living wages they so critically need.

Thirty-six percent of nursing home workers in New York qualify for public assistance. They work tirelessly to provide enhanced quality of life for older adults. They deserve more than what is provided by Hochul and her staff. Imagine a state where older adults matter and the employees who serve them matter. What a difference that might be.

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Yet New York State does not prioritize nursing home residents and the staff who care for them.

Medicaid rates to nursing homes are still based on 2007 costs despite a 45% increase in inflation. We need an inflation check for our nursing homes.

Nursing care facilities cannot pass on costs to customers like businesses and other organizations. They rely on a Medicaid reimbursement system. New York's Medicaid rate paid to nursing homes ranks among the lowest in the country.

Everything adds up and we are now faced with a human-made disaster. More than 33 nursing homes in the state have closed since 2014. Over 1,600 nursing home beds have permanently closed. Consequently, hospitals are in gridlock because they cannot discharge patients to nursing homes. This has created a bottleneck in emergency rooms.

I am thrilled that the governor has recognized the impact of high inflation and is attempting to do something. Nursing homes have been fighting the impact of inflation for years with no relief.

What would be more meaningful than a one-time check from the proposed inflation refund, would be an investment in the nursing homes and staff we employ.

Michael S. King is president and CEO of Jewish Home in Rochester.

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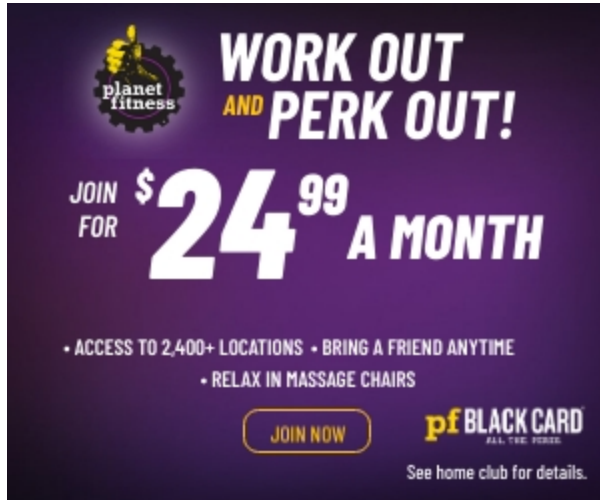
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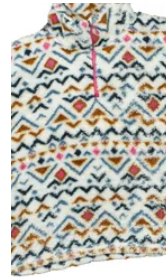
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