



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Long-Term Care Residents

March 2024

Residents Are Leading an Effort to Nearly Triple PNA Funds

Medicaid-eligible residents of nursing homes, state developmental centers, and state or county psychiatric hospitals would receive a monthly Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) of \$140, up from the current \$50, under a bill drafted by residents and introduced Feb. 27 in the New Jersey Assembly.

The bill ([A3908](#)), sponsored by Assemblymen Christopher DePhillips and Al Barlas, would implement annual cost-of-living adjustments to the PNA to match increases in Social Security benefits. Resident Stacy Moore worked closely with DePhillips' office to get the bill drafted.



Residents around the state, including Bob Cole and Joan Staab, have been diligently working to increase the PNA for years. The residents' next goal is to enlist a state Senator to introduce an identical bill. To become law, a bill must pass the Assembly and Senate before being signed by Gov. Phil Murphy.

The American Council on Aging reports that 26 states and the District of Columbia mandate higher PNA amounts than New Jersey, with the highest rate being \$200 a month in Alaska. Only 13 states require a PNA lower than \$50.

The PNA is a Medicaid-eligible resident's only income, and \$50 does not go far in New Jersey, which is ranked by *Forbes Advisor* as the state with the fifth-highest cost of living. New Jersey's current PNA amounts to about \$1.67 per day — roughly the cost of a single snack from a nursing home vending machine.

Residents are expected to use PNA funds to cover an array of expenses, such as clothing; shoes; haircuts and most hair care products; supplies for crafting or other hobbies; and vitamins and supplements not provided by the nursing home.

Anyone interested in supporting the PNA bill should contact Community Engagement at 1-609-690-4740 or community@ltco.nj.gov.

To reach out to your legislators directly, visit njleg.state.nj.us/#findLegislator. You can search by municipality to find your legislators and their contact information.

Watch future editions of *The Beacon* for updates on the PNA legislation.

Residents and LTCO Director to Speak at Virtual Aging Summit

The Rutgers Hub for Aging Collaboration will host the *InnovAGING NJ Summit* on Friday, March 22, to showcase innovative programs and partnerships that are improving the lives of older adults.

The free event will be held via Zoom from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Attendees can choose from more than a dozen breakout sessions, including one presented by Elizabeth Speidel, LTCO Director of Community Engagement, and Gary Brown and Ray DiFrancesco, residents of a nursing home in Plainsboro.

They will discuss Community Engagement's work with residents and family members to help build a sense of community — both within individual homes and between facilities across the state — and ensure that residents' voices are heard and respected in efforts to identify issues and create change in long-term care.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/3rruxu86> to learn more and register.



Justice in Aging, a national non-profit legal advocacy group, has updated its guide, *25 Common Nursing Home Problems & How to Resolve Them*, which gives residents, family members, friends, and advocates the tools to identify and solve problems that frequently face residents.

To download guide, visit:

<https://justiceinaging.org/25-common-nursing-home-problems/>

HAPPY SAINT PATRICK'S DAY



New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, LTC Ombudsman

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