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## In Brief

# Measure advances to boost Medicaid rates for low-income assisted living

By: [Dana DiFilippo](#) - March 6, 2023 4:27 pm



Under new legislation, New Jersey's daily Medicaid reimbursement rate for assisted living facilities and programs would rise. (Getty Images)

Lawmakers advanced legislation Monday that would boost daily Medicaid rates for assisted living housing and programs, a move meant to help low- and middle-income seniors live independently longer and provide better pay for their caregivers.

Under [a bill](#) sponsored by Sens. Gordon Johnson (D-Bergen) and Robert Singer (R-Ocean), the rates would climb \$10 to \$13, beginning in July, to \$114 for assisted living facilities, \$104, for comprehensive personal care homes, and \$94 for assisted living programs. Rates would be recalculated each July under the bill.

New Jersey's rates have long lagged behind other states.

Before the pandemic, New Jersey's Medicaid reimbursement for assisted living hadn't changed for 10 years, said Kevin Fiore, a partner in New Standard Senior Living, which houses about 500 people in low-income, assisted living housing in South Jersey.

Even with the bump the bill would bring, the rate still would fall below states like Illinois at \$129 a day, Minnesota at \$139 a day, and Washington, D.C., at \$205 a day, Fiore testified.

Still, he added, it's "a step in the right direction."

"There is a reason there are so few communities in New Jersey dedicated to low-income, frail residents. The Medicaid reimbursement rate is chief among those reasons," Fiore said. "As a state seeking continued transition from institutional settings to home- and community-based settings, without meaningful Medicaid rate increases, the housing problem will only get worse as the state continues to age."

New Jersey ranked last among all states in a [2022 study](#), by the nonprofit United Health Foundation for housing availability and affordability for people 62 and older.

Rebecca Lynn is a registered nurse and volunteer administrator at nonprofit Assisted Living Inc., a 72-unit affordable, assisted-living apartment building in Ewing.

“The combination of residents being able to keep much of their independence, such as being able to cook for themselves in their own apartment while also having access to hands-on care, keeps our residents healthier and out of more expensive settings like hospitals and nursing homes,” Lynn told legislators.

She added: “An increased daily rate would allow me to offer higher wages, stable employment, comprehensive benefits, and guarantee increases to my staff, while helping me offer these better incentives to find more staff during this extraordinary staffing crisis.”

The Senate’s health, human services and senior citizens committee unanimously agreed to advance the bill.

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Dana DiFilippo comes to the New Jersey Monitor from WHYY, Philadelphia’s NPR station, and the Philadelphia Daily News, a paper known for exposing corruption and holding public officials accountable. Prior to that, she worked at newspapers in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and suburban Philadelphia and has freelanced for various local and national magazines, newspapers and websites. She lives in Central Jersey with her husband, a photojournalist, and their two children.

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