

## Restoring Dignity: Nursing Home Residents Lead Movement to Raise the Personal Needs Allowance



Bill A2691, which nearly triples the personal needs allowance (PNA), took a step forward in May, thanks in large part to nursing home residents who shared their stories with the Assembly Aging and Human Services Committee. A2691 raises the PNA to \$140 a month and sets up annual cost-of-living increases.

Residents Louis Bonilla, Tanette Clegg, and James Cook testified at a May 7 committee hearing, and statements written by residents Stacy Moore, Gail Smith, and Helen Tucci were read aloud by staff members of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) Community Engagement Program. The LTCO submitted written testimony from resident Gretchen Pfeffer, former resident Ray DiFrancesco, and the Ombudsman, Laurie Facciarossa Brewer.

Testimony focused on residents' unique but similar experiences trying to live on only \$50 a month — scrimping every dollar so they can afford an occasional takeout meal to skip the nursing home food; going without the things they want because they have to spend money on needs the nursing home fails to fulfill; and trying to save money for new shoes or clothes.

Residents shared a frustrating truth: The pensions and Social Security they worked hard for are handed over to the nursing home. The PNA is all residents get to keep. Residents said they deserve to keep more than \$50 of *their* money.

Committee members, clearly moved by the testimony, pledged their support for the residents. The committee voted 6-0 to approve A2691 and refer it to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. An identical bill (S1576) awaits a hearing in the Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee.

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