



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Long-Term Care Residents

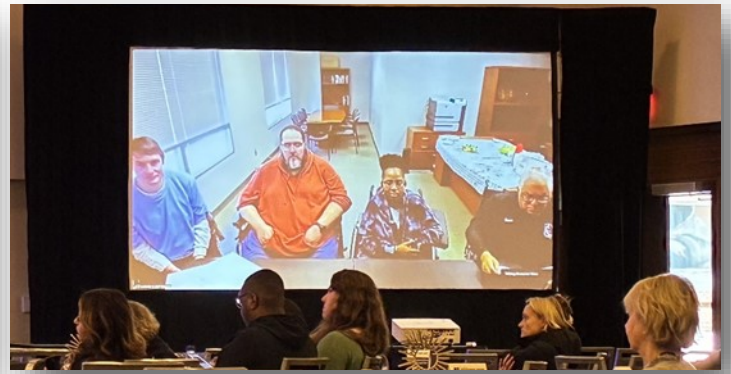
December 2025

New Jersey Residents, LTCO Take National Stage

If you want to fix what ails nursing homes, residents can be your go-to experts. And in New Jersey, residents have gone beyond the walls of their own homes by forming a group — NJ Nursing Home Residents United — that works to build community with residents statewide and identify common issues.

Residents United has been busy during the past year, working closely with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) on several initiatives, notably an effort to raise New Jersey's personal needs allowance (PNA) from \$50 to \$140 a month.

The New Jersey residents shared their strategies and methods during a Nov. 5 workshop at the 2025 Consumer Voice conference, which was attended by long-term care advocates from across the country.



Residents Raymond DiFrancesco and Gail Smith, along with Elizabeth Speidel, the LTCO Director of Community Engagement, led the presentation in person. Residents Chris Thomas, James Cook, Tanette Craig, and Louis Bonilla joined via Internet connection from the LTCO office in Trenton. The workshop delved into petition drives, media coverage, outreach to legislators and policymakers, and how residents worked with LTCO to use the social media channels to support the PNA increase.

The four-day conference marked the 50th anniversary of Consumer Voice, a leading national advocacy organization for long-term care residents. **Other highlights...**



Can We Talk? Residents United member Raymond DiFrancesco (*pictured left, outside Sen. Cory Booker's office in the Capitol Complex*) participated in a roundtable discussion on Nov. 4 with resident leaders from Texas, Ohio, Maryland, and Connecticut.

The discussion touched on topics such as political challenges facing nursing home residents, the need for fundamental culture change in nursing homes, and how to help residents make sure their voices are heard and respected.

To connect with Residents United, call 1-609-690-4740 or email community@ltco.nj.gov.

Congratulations! Elizabeth Speidel (*pictured, left*) received the Howard Hinds Award, presented annually to honor an effective advocate for long-term care consumers. Speidel was nominated by Gail Smith (*right*) and other residents who work with Elizabeth and her team to transform nursing homes into places where people can lead meaningful lives.

Read more at <https://tinyurl.com/bddm2uby>.



Nursing home residents Gail Smith (*seated, front*) and Ray DiFrancesco (*right*) were part of a New Jersey contingent visiting Capitol Hill on Nov. 6. Also pictured, from left: Amy Brown, LTCO Policy Director; Gwen Orlowski, Executive Director, Disability Rights NJ; Victoria Schall, an attorney; Katie Squires, Associate State Director of Advocacy, AARP-NJ; and Latenya King, Vice President of SEIU Local 1199, which represents nursing home workers in New Jersey, five other states, and the District of Columbia.

The group met with staff members for U.S. Sens. Andy Kim and Cory Booker and U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson-Coleman to educate federal lawmakers about what is happening in New Jersey nursing homes and share the perspectives of older adults, people with disabilities, and direct-care workers.

Winter Sled Find the Difference!



Answer key: hat pompom, hat trim, scarf fringe, scarf stripes, scarf, snow, eyebrows, and mouth

RESIDENTS RIGHTS' CORNER

You have the right to a nourishing, palatable, and well-balanced diet that meets your preferences. This includes three meals a day plus alternative meals or snacks outside of normal mealtimes if indicated in your care plan. You cannot be charged for special meals ordered by your medical provider.

If you feel your rights have been violated, please call **1-877-582-6995**.



New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, LTC Ombudsman

www.NJ.GOV/LTCO

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