

**SENATOR OPPENHEIMER CO-HOSTS WESTCHESTER TOWN HALL FORUM ON LONG-TERM
HEALTH CARE SERVICES**

Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) co-hosted with Assemblyman George Latimer a Westchester town hall forum addressing state funding for long-term health care services. The forum, which was organized by the Continuing Care Leadership Coalition (CCLC), was held on January 15, 2010 at the United Hebrew Geriatric Center in New Rochelle.

The forum was designed to bring together long term health care providers, residents, staff and legislative leaders to discuss the concerns of senior and disabled community members about funding cuts to nursing home and home health care services. In addition to Senator Oppenheimer and Assemblyman Latimer, the forum was attended by Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly members Sandy Galef, Gary Pretlow and Kenneth Zebrowski.

"Senator Oppenheimer and her colleagues in the Legislature were heroic in fighting what would have been devastating cuts to long term care in 2009," said CCLC President Scott Amrhein. "We are fortunate to have her advocacy as we once again face budget proposals that, unless reversed, will do unimaginable damage to necessary services for frail seniors and disabled New Yorkers."

Mr. Amrhein summarized the State's proposal to impose a "regional pricing" payment system for nursing homes, concluding that "this new system would penalize Westchester's finest long term care facilities," and calling on legislators to stop current plans for its implementation. Several nursing home residents spoke movingly about their bond with nurses and other caregivers, and expressed fear that budget cuts could result in staff reductions or nursing home closures.

Senator Oppenheimer thanked CCLC and the forum participants for providing a human face to the health care budget debate. "Given the prolonged economic downturn, it's likely that we'll again be faced with significant proposed cuts health care services," predicted the Senator in advance of the Governor's 2010-11 budget proposal. As in the case of the recent deficit reduction plan, she and her fellow legislators vowed to consider carefully ways to contain government spending without adversely affecting quality nursing home and rehabilitative care.

Pictured from left to right: Assemblyman Latimer; Rita Mabli, President and CEO of the United Hebrew Center; Assemblyman Kenneth Zebrowski; Senator Oppenheimer; Assemblyman Gary Pretlow; Assemblywoman Andrea Stewart-Cousins; David Alpert, United Hebrew Center Board member; Scott Amrhein, President of CCLC. Not pictured: Assemblywoman Sandy Galef.

