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**Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services
NYC Council Queens Delegation
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My name is Katie Foley and I am the Director, Public Affairs at Selfhelp Community Services. Thank you to Delegation Chair Karen Koslowitz the members of the Queens Delegation for your consideration of our funding requests.

Selfhelp was founded in 1936 to help those fleeing Nazi Germany maintain their independence and dignity as they struggled to forge new lives in America. Today, Selfhelp has grown into one of the largest and most respected not-for-profit human service agencies in the New York metropolitan area, with 46 programs throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Nassau County. We provide a broad set of services to more than 20,000 elderly, frail, and vulnerable New Yorkers each year, while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America. Selfhelp offers a complete network of community-based home care, social service, and senior housing programs with the overarching goal of helping clients to live with dignity and independence and avoid institutionalization.

Our services are extensive and include: specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; ten affordable senior housing complexes; four Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs; three intensive case management programs; five senior centers including one of New York City's first Innovative Senior Centers; home health care; client centered technology programs including the Selfhelp's nationally recognized Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship; the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program (SHARP); and New York Connects, which provides seniors and people with disabilities with the information and support they need to remain living independently in their own homes.

Last year, we served 20,000 individuals, with approximately 14,000 in Queens. We are grateful for the support of our elected officials in the past, and look forward to working together this year to support programs that help people age with dignity and independence.

Today I will highlight three requests that we submitted to the Queens Delegation in Selfhelp's FY20 discretionary applications: first, to support and expand the Queens senior transportation program; second, to increase the capacity of Selfhelp's Virtual Senior Center to meet the needs of homebound older adults in Queens; and third, support for the Saturday program at the Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Innovative Senior Center.

Senior Transportation Program: Selfhelp is seeking a total of \$35,000 from the delegation for funding to expand transportation services to medical appointments for seniors living in Queens. With funding provided by the delegation for this year, Selfhelp has so far provided approximately 300 rides across multiple City Council districts in the borough. Due to the demand for accessible transportation and popularity of this program we believe that with this funding, Selfhelp will be able to continue to serve the Queens seniors that in need.

Based on feedback received by individuals who benefitted from the program, as well as the demand for services, we know that the program improves quality of life for older New Yorkers, as it eliminates concerns about transportation costs, traveling alone, and navigating public transit. Further, in transportation deserts in parts of NYC and Queens in particular, this program removed a significant barrier for older adults in caring for their health.

Virtual Senior Center (VSC): Selfhelp is seeking \$25,000 from the Queens delegation to expand the VSC throughout Queens. With this additional funding, there will be increased flexibility to serve additional homebound older adults living throughout the borough.

Selfhelp's Virtual Senior Center provides socially isolated and homebound older adults with the opportunity to connect with each other through an easy-to-use platform. Last year's allocation from the delegation, enabled 15 low-income home-bound and/or socially isolated older adults living in Queens to continue participating in the Virtual Senior Center program. The funds for FY20 will enable 15 home-bound and/or socially isolated older adults to continue participating in the program and will enable additional 10 new low-income home-bound older adults living in Queens to receive the program.

The Virtual Senior Center program provided 2989 online interactive classes between January 2018 and December 2018 with the average rating of 4.6 out of 5. Among the 2985 online classes, 543 classes were offered in Chinese, 81 were offered in Korean and 343 were offered in Russian. Independent evaluation has found that the program reduces isolation and loneliness and increases connectedness and self-reported health status as well as being identified by participants as improving their overall quality of life.

Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Innovative Senior Center: Selfhelp is seeking \$30,000 from the Queens delegation to support the Saturday program. The special Saturday program has been developed from fledgling program into a fully operating program every Saturday. We serve over 200 Indian and Chinese lunches cooked in our kitchen and offer 16-18 different classes. This program is especially beneficial for seniors who work during the week and are seeking a nutritious meal and community activities on the weekend. The requested funds will be used for extra raw foods and for extra staffing.

The Queens Delegation of the City Council has also provided support for the following initiatives and programs that are critical for Selfhelp and our clients:

- **Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivor Initiative:** As part of this Council initiative, Selfhelp is seeking \$350,000 to provide direct social services and case management to frail and isolated Holocaust survivors.
- **Social Adult Day Care:** As part of this Council initiative, Selfhelp is seeking \$150,000. This funding provides for the continued operation of the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program to provide socialization, recreation, and transportation services for individuals with Alzheimer's, providing caregivers needed respite.
- **NORC/NNORC Program:** Selfhelp is seeking \$285,000 to support the continued operation of our Northridge/Brulene/Southridge NNORC program, enabling people to age in their community and access needed health, wellness and social services.

Thank you to the members of the Queens Delegation for the opportunity to testify today.