

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Another Voice:

Western New York's long-term care system is being tested. Lawmakers must act.



Dan Savitt, Mar 12, 2026

For seniors like Central Cheektowaga's Timothy Green, stability in long-term care isn't a policy debate. It's the difference between living safely at home or losing independence in an institution. That stability is now at risk because of how New York State pays for the essential care and services Timothy needs.

Much of New York's long-term care system operates through Medicaid Managed Long Term Care plans. MLTC connects seniors and people with disabilities to hands-on home care, transportation to doctors and other daily supports that allow them to live independently.

For Timothy, who faced major life changes and health complications after diabetes led to the amputation of his legs, our VNS Health MLTC plan has been a stabilizing force. Today, he lives safely at home and is confident knowing his care team is there to support him.

When recent state policy changes led to the closure or transition of several MLTC plans in Western New York, VNS Health worked with state and regional partners to protect continuity of care for more than 3,000 local residents and 12,000 of our neighbors across upstate New York.

Unfortunately, this kind of care is in serious jeopardy. New York's payment system rewards plans whose members have fewer needs, while plans caring for people with complex medical and care needs are left struggling to cover the cost of care.

Some plans take advantage, enrolling tens of thousands of people who require relatively few services. This costs taxpayers billions.

That's not how we do things at VNS Health. We're a long-standing state nonprofit dedicated to the health and well-being of the people we serve. But no organization can operate if funding does not cover the real cost of care.

Instead of fixing these distortions, New York is reinforcing them. If these funding disparities persist, and if Albany continues to fail in closing these gaps, seniors and people with disabilities like Timothy will end up paying the highest price.

Thankfully, there is a fix. Legislation has been introduced to ensure that high-quality MLTC plans serving New Yorkers with the greatest needs are funded appropriately.

Our lawmakers must include this legislation in the State Budget and ensure that long-term care remains stable in Buffalo and across Western New York.

Dan Savitt is president and CEO of VNS Health.

The Buffalo News is a daily newspaper written for the general public in the greater Buffalo, NY area. The business section appears daily, covering local and national business stories, daily stock market rates and real estate. Articles include features, breaking news, trends, analysis, profiles and investigative stories. Buffalo Next is the outlet's free evening newsletter, which combines insights with the latest news. It reaches an estimated audience of 1,679,519 through articles and social media.