



Stuart Kaplan, CEO of Selfhelp (right), Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Willie Rapfogel, CEO of Met Council, discuss H.R. 2786 during a congressional briefing on October 26.

### **Advancing our Historic Mission: Selfhelp Hosts Congressional Briefing on Caring for Survivors**

Selfhelp has been working closely with the office of Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fl) to support her legislation, H.R. 2786, aimed at amending the Older Americans Act (OAA) to increase services for Holocaust survivors. Since we first learned of the Congresswoman's intention to introduce such legislation, we have offered our expertise and our resources including our population study and the input of our uniquely qualified staff to ensure the provisions of the bill meet the most pressing needs of survivors. On October 26, 2011, Selfhelp and Met Council, another UJA Federation of New York agency, hosted a briefing in the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C., to educate elected officials and their staff members about the distinct issues facing Holocaust survivors and the challenges confronting organizations that provide services to them.

Selfhelp CEO Stuart C. Kaplan opened the briefing by introducing Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz who spoke passionately of her desire to see this legislation enacted into law. Mr. Kaplan then spoke extensively about Selfhelp's Nazi Victim services programming and the unique discipline that is caring for the needs of survivors and the services they require to age in place with dignity, comfort, security and quality of life.

Analysis of the current and future needs of this group shows that this last generation of survivors will have complex needs. Fully 35 percent of survivors will be coping with serious or chronic illnesses and 51 percent will be "very poor" or "near poor" under

Federal guidelines. Mr. Kaplan stressed that the need to provide services, and funding for those services, will remain great for many years.

Willie Rapfogel, CEO of The Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, also addressed the audience, expounding on the growing problem of Jewish poverty, particularly among survivors of Nazi persecution. Congressmen Bob Turner and Ed Towns, of New York's 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> districts, respectively, participated in the briefing and expressed their support for the bill.

Selfhelp is greatly encouraged by the three major components of H.R. 2786, which include designating Holocaust survivors as a preferred population for services under the OAA; creating a point person for Holocaust survivors services in the Federal Administration on Aging; and establishing a grant program to fund services for survivors.

Selfhelp will continue to advocate on behalf of this legislation until it is passed into law.