

**Testimony of
Greg Olsen, Acting Director
New York State Office for the Aging**



**Office for
the Aging**

**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
Conducted By
Senate Finance Committee
Assembly Ways & Means Committee**

**Tuesday, February 6, 2018
Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York**

Good morning Chairpersons Young and Weinstein, and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly standing committees. I am Greg Olsen, Acting Director of the New York State Office for the Aging, and I'm honored to testify on the portions of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's proposed budget that affect older New Yorkers.

The New York State Office for the Aging promotes and administers programs and services for New Yorkers 60 years of age and older as well as their families, friends, and neighbors, who help them remain as independent as possible, for as long as possible, in their homes and communities of choice. NYSOFA provides leadership and direction to an integrated, coordinated network of 59 county-based Area Agencies on Aging, and almost 1,200 public and private organizations that serve and help empower older adults and their families. Governor Cuomo's priority to strengthen service delivery; increase efficiencies; and improve outcomes has created strong working partnerships between our office and the Department of Health, and many of our sister State Agencies.

Despite a multi-billion dollar state deficit and increased uncertainty at the federal level, Governor Cuomo's commitment to the state's older population is unwavering. The 2019 Executive Budget maintains NYSOFA's previous funding levels while including a host of new initiatives that address primary areas of concern for older New Yorkers and their families. Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget helps older adults and their families by:

- Launching a long-term care planning council to understand the projected and desired needs of older adults in New York. The council will analyze, evaluate, and identify the existing service gaps in New York's long-term care system; determine the most cost-effective evidence based interventions; and prepare a strategic plan to meet the emerging needs of New York's aging population over the next decade;
- Issuing an age-friendly executive order that directs agencies to consider the impact of their policies and procurements on health and healthy aging, aligned with the eight domains of an age-friendly community;
- Continuing the state's priority to advance the construction and renovation of affordable housing for older New Yorker's;
- Protecting older and disabled veterans from deceitful business targeting practices and scams related to applying for federal benefits;
- Helping better understand, market, and apply for Paid Family Leave benefits that will support the role of informal caregivers;
- Launching NY broadband awards to link individuals to the Internet, reducing social isolation;
- Strengthening the rural emergency medical service system, leveraging hospital community benefit investments to support prevention initiatives;
- Expanding advanced care planning;

The 2019 Executive Budget honors the state's commitment to ensuring those who are served by NYSOFA have access to cost-effective, high quality, coordinated services that support autonomy, independence, and access to objective information and assistance regarding options, benefits, application assistance, and interagency and systems coordination and advocacy. The Budget maintains all funding for key programs including the Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program, which provides non-medical in-home services, case management, respite, and ancillary services to frail older adults, most of whom are low-income and not eligible for Medicaid. The Wellness in Nutrition Program helps fund New York's national leading nutrition program, providing home delivered and congregate meals, and providing nutrition counseling and education to frail older adults who are unable to shop or prepare meals for themselves. The proposed Executive Budget also retains the \$500,000 investment in last year's enacted budget for the expansion of enhanced multidisciplinary teams. We have partnered with the Office of Victims Services to use this investment to draw down an additional \$2 million in federal funds annually for three years.

The Governor's Budget proposal also invests in New York Connects sustainability through a partnership with the Department of Health. NY Connects is a statewide, locally-based no wrong door system that provides one stop access to free, objective, and comprehensive information and assistance on accessing long-term services and supports.

The State Office for the Aging understands the need to continually do more to meet new and emerging needs, and through various partnerships, we work to meet these needs without requiring additional state funding. Through innovative partnerships with foundations, community partners, and our own innovation, we are expanding services and testing new delivery models. These include:

- Piloting home sharing based on the successful Home Share Vermont model;
- Implementing the Aging Mastery Program (AMP) evidence-based intervention to develop sustainable behaviors across many dimensions that lead to improved health, stronger economic security, enhanced well-being, and increased societal participation;
- Working with the Department of Health to design a clear pathway for inclusion of aging network service contracting in the state's efforts around payment reform through value based payments;
- Partnering with NYSERDA to target low-and moderate-income households to improve energy efficiency and to save money, which could be used for other needs and reduce the risk from using old or outdated equipment and products;
- Piloting volunteer transportation programs in rural areas to support dialysis treatments, cancer screenings, and physician visits;
- Piloting the use of tablets with isolated older adults in rural counties who can utilize technology, but may not be able to visit physical locations. The free, five-week program pilots one-hour, in-home sessions on the basics of using an iPad to connect with loved ones, engage in interests, and master new skills;
- Working with the village to village network and the Albany Guardian Society to seed local village movements that organize neighbors helping neighbors;

- Working to expand respite options for caregivers through partnerships to expand the Respite Education and Support Tools (REST) model statewide,
- Partnering with the Mental Health Association of NYS to provide mental health first aid training to almost 300 direct care practitioners, and training more than 300 direct care professionals in behavioral health training module through Boston University's Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research (CADER).

Our external partnerships contributed to a wide variety of services delivered to more than 700,000 older adults last year, including providing 62,000 older individuals with home delivered meals and 181,000 older individuals with congregate meals; Medicare assistance for 135,000 individuals; transportation for 107,000; information and assistance for 289,000; health promotion for 125,000; nutrition counseling and education for 132,000; case management for 66,000; legal assistance for 18,000; personal care services for 12,000; and evidence-based interventions for 20,000 older adults with chronic conditions.

NYSOFA will continue to engage state agencies, not-for-profits, and other community-based organizations to serve New York's older population as effectively as possible.

Thank you; I am happy to answer any questions.