

New York State Assembly
Carl E. Heastie
Speaker

Committee on
Social Services

Andrew Hevesi
Chair



ANDREW HEVESI
Assemblyman 28th District
Queens County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIRMAN
Social Services Committee

COMMITTEES
Energy
Health
Labor
Insurance

December 15, 2017

The Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
Room 932
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Speaker Heastie:

On behalf of the Assembly Committee on Social Services, I respectfully submit to you the Committee's 2017 Annual Report. The Committee secured enactment of policies and continued investments in programs that will help low-income individuals and families achieve greater economic security, thereby providing enhanced opportunities for them to escape poverty.

The New York State Assembly Social Services committee's agenda for 2018 will be comprised of legislation and budget actions focused on reducing poverty and homelessness in New York State, as well as cementing opportunities for the disabled, victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, and those effected by childhood trauma.

In the 2017 legislative session, our committee took action on a number of substantive bills. This included A.237, which ensures that individuals on public assistance with a disability are provided appropriate and reasonable work accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our committee also reported A.3040A, which allows attendance in a four-year post-secondary education to count toward an individual's public assistance employment requirement where the attendance is consistent with the individual's employment and assessment plan goals, and make corresponding changes to income and resource exemptions for monies set aside for paying for education. Additionally, we reported A.8172, which would permit caregivers to exclude children with unearned income from the public assistance household.

Further, in 2017, the committee spearheaded the fight to ensure that the 35,000 supportive housing units for vulnerable New Yorkers are built, and we will continue this fight. These units, in addition to housing the recipients, will also provide mental health, counseling, and other comprehensive services to those who are, or who are on the verge of homelessness, spanning

populations from children, to veterans, to domestic violence victims, and the elderly. This effort received bipartisan support from 133 members of the Assembly, as well as bipartisan support in the New York State Senate. The Mayor of the City of New York also publicly committed, and is currently in the process of building, 15,000 units of supportive housing in New York City. Subsequently, the Governor announced in his 2016 State of the State Address that New York State would fund 20,000 of these units, and in the 2016-2017 enacted budget, \$1 billion was allocated to build the first 6,000 units.

Moreover, along with my colleagues in government, and help from the Coalition for the Homeless, Empire Justice Center, the Legal Aid Society, and other advisory organizations, this coming session, we will again be focused on implementing A.8178, the Home Stability Support (HSS) program. There are currently 150,000 homeless children in New York State along with 80,000 families on the brink of homelessness. New York State reported to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that in New York, over 19,000 more people enter homelessness per year than exit homelessness each year. To combat this epidemic, the committee will propose HSS, a statewide rental supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and are facing eviction and homelessness. This program will be 100 percent state funded and will provide mandate relief to financially strained counties. Supportive Housing and Home Stability Support will reduce the use of ancillary services such as visits to detoxification centers, hospitalizations, and emergency room use. This in turn will also save taxpayers money. These programs are innovative and effective ways to combat the worst homeless crisis our state has encountered since the Great Depression.

Along with our continued efforts for HSS and supportive housing, this past year I have partnered with organizations such as the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Mayor's Taskforce Against Domestic Violence, and Lawyers Committee Against Domestic Violence to start constructing legislation to provide victims with the ability to terminate leases under the name of perpetrators, facilitating their ability to remove themselves and their loved ones from hazardous arrangements. The committee will also help recipients of the State Supplement Program (SSP) benefit. Individuals eligible for this benefit include the blind, elderly, and disabled, who have experienced numerous adversities due to low SSP rates and problems with the administration of the program. First, we will continue to support legislation which will increase SSP rates to elevate recipients up to the federal poverty level. In accordance with this initiative, we are also working toward an ongoing Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for these rates, ensuring that SSP recipients continuously receive the minimum of what they need to be self-sufficient. We will also aim to address programmatic difficulties which SSP recipients encounter.

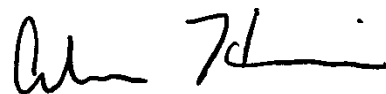
Further, my committee will introduce legislation focused on helping victims of human trafficking. This will include providing temporary housing assistance to a single victim, while allowing the program provider to be reimbursed by New York State for any payment differential for housing a single individual in a room intended for double occupancy in order to address the system-wide lack of shelter for single adults. We will also introduce legislation establishing "culturally competent" short-term and long-term safe house residential facilities and services operated by not-for-profit agencies for victims of human trafficking. The placement in these facilities shall be available for victims of human trafficking at the initial point of contact with

law enforcement, a local social services district, or social or legal services provider. These services shall be “culturally competent” to the extent practicable to include helping these victims with services such as case management, emergency temporary housing, health care, mental health counseling, drug addiction screening and treatment, language interpretation and translation services, English language instruction, job training and placement assistance, and post-employment services for job retention.

Lastly, the Social Services Committee plans to introduce legislation to combat Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs harm children’s developing brains so profoundly that the effects show up decades later. ACEs are the cause of chronic disease, most mental illness, and are at the root of most violence and include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; parental mental illness, substance abuse, or incarceration; parental separation or divorce; and domestic violence. New York State currently offers no consistent ACEs training. Therefore, we will be introducing legislation to mandate comprehensive ACEs training throughout Domestic Violence shelters. In these shelters, directors and staff see the day-to-day impacts of ACEs on a two-generation level - the mother and child(ren). Yet the staff may not know exactly what they are seeing, or how to address what they are seeing appropriately. A consistent training would lay the foundation for staff to understand the prevalence of ACEs, learn about efforts to reduce and prevent them, and start to understand the long-term consequences of ACEs, the associations between ACEs and Executive Functioning, health risk behaviors, and chronic conditions.

Overall, the Social Services committee has a wide net of policy initiatives which we plan to implement this upcoming session. These programs will greatly help some of New York State’s most vulnerable people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Hevesi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Andrew Hevesi, Chair
Committee on Social Services

**2017 ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Andrew D. Hevesi
Chair**

Committee Members

Majority

Jeffrion L. Aubry
Charles Barron
Rodneyse Bichotte
Maritza Davila
Latoya Joyner
Ron Kim
Shelley Mayer
Victor Pichardo
Michaëlle Solages
Anthony D'Urso

Minority

Andrew Goodell (Ranker)
Anthony H. Palumbo
Daniel G. Stec
Brian D. Miller
Melissa Miller

Committee Staff

Rebecca Rasmussen, Committee Clerk

Program and Counsel Staff

Rebecca Mudie, Assistant Secretary for Program and Policy
Jennifer Marrero, Principal Analyst
Jennifer Sacco, Counsel
Ihrar Muhammadi, Committee Assistant
Terri Zaleski, Executive Secretary

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Assembly Social Services Committee has jurisdiction over legislation affecting programs providing financial and support services to indigent households in New York State. The work of the Committee also affects the aged, blind, and disabled residing in the community and in residential care facilities. The statutory basis for these programs is contained in the State Social Services Law.

The Committee works with the Committees on Health, Children and Families, Aging, Labor, Housing, and the Task Force on Homelessness. The Committee has legislative oversight responsibilities for programs administered by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

OTDA is responsible for supervising programs that provide assistance and support to eligible families and individuals in the state. Some of OTDA's functions include: providing temporary cash assistance; providing assistance in paying for food; providing heating assistance; overseeing New York State's child support enforcement program; determining certain aspects of eligibility for Social Security Disability benefits; supervising homeless housing and services programs; and providing assistance to certain immigrant populations.

The Legislature enacted the Social Services Law to authorize the administration of basic temporary assistance and emergency support programs statewide. The local Departments of Social Services (DSS), or Human Resource Administration (HRA) in New York City, implement the Social Service Law to provide temporary help to individuals and families with their economic and social services needs to assist them in reaching self-sufficiency. These programs include Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children, Emergency Assistance for Adults, and certain parts of the Supplemental Security Income Program.

- Family Assistance (FA) - FA is a federally funded temporary assistance (TA) program for families. FA can only be provided to a family that includes a minor child living with a parent or caretaker relative, or to a pregnant woman. As a TANF-funded program, FA is subject to the state 60-month lifetime limit on assistance.
- Safety Net Assistance (SNA) - established by the Welfare Reform Act (WRA) of 1997 to provide assistance to individuals and families who are ineligible for Family Assistance (FA) or other federal temporary assistance programs. The SNA program is comprised of cash and non-cash components.
- Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children (EAF) - is a federally funded program which provides assistance to deal with crisis situations threatening a family with a child under the age of 18, or under 19 and attending full-time secondary school or the equivalent level of vocational or technical training. EAF is designed to meet needs resulting from a sudden occurrence or a set of circumstances that was unforeseen and beyond the applicant's control that demand immediate attention.
- Emergency Assistance for Adults (EAA) - are grants to assist aged, blind or disabled individuals and couples who have been determined eligible for or are receiving Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits or additional state payments and applied for such assistance to meet emergency needs that cannot be met by the regular monthly benefits of SSI and additional state payments.

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program - established by Congress in 1974 under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers the program which provides a federal grant to individuals and couples who are aged, blind, or disabled.

Homeless Services

Local social services districts also have a responsibility to provide services and assistance to individuals in an effort to prevent homelessness, to meet the temporary housing and other immediate needs of eligible homeless persons, and to assist homeless persons in securing permanent housing. Individuals eligible for such assistance are those who are both homeless and eligible for TA.

Domestic Violence

The federal Wellstone-Murray Family Violence Option allows states to address the safety needs of domestic violence victims and their children within the state's TANF plan. The Family Violence Option includes procedures for screening for domestic violence, assessment, service referrals, and temporary waivers of TA requirements which would place the victim at further risk.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

New York administers the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which issues monthly benefits that can be used to purchase food at authorized retail food stores. Benefits are provided through an electronic benefit card, similar to a debit or credit card. Eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income, expenses and other factors.

Any person has the right to file an application for a type of temporary assistance or care with the local social services district at any time. Each applicant for services is required to meet all eligibility requirements in order to receive benefits. OTDA has created a website, Mybenefits.com, where individuals are able to learn about available benefits and the requirements to receive such benefits.

II. SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION – 2017

A. INCOME MAINTENANCE

1. **Financial Literacy Training** **A.474A (Paulin)/S.1170A (Carlucci)**

Local social services may offer financial literacy and personal finance course to individuals receiving public assistance. Course work will court toward an individual's work activity.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 275.

2. **Increase to the State Supplement Program (SSP)** **A.6715B (Brindisi)/ S.6732 (Serino)**

This legislation will increase the amount of money low-income individuals and couples in enhanced residential care receive through the SSP. Once fully implemented in 2027, recipients of the SSP will see an increase of \$598 per month.

Veto Memo 241 12/17

3. **Resource Exemptions** **A.7801 (Hevesi)/S.5993 (Tedisco)**

This legislation ensures that families can retain essential assets while remaining eligible for PA by exempting the following assets for consideration in a family's financial eligibility for PA: up to \$2,000 (\$3,000 if someone in the household is 60 or older), **a primary residence, and an automobile valued up to \$4,650 (or up to \$9,300 if it is needed to seek or retain employment)**. If the existing provision were not extended, the type and amount of exemptions will be left to regulatory action by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance subject to the approval of the Division of the Budget. This bill extends these provisions for an additional two years.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 140.

B. OTHER LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

1. **Expands Domestic Violence Crimes** **A.1330 (Weinstein)/ S.6239 (Lanza)**

We know that in addition to physical and psychological tactics, abusers employ economic means to control and otherwise abuse their victim making it harder for victims to secure their safety. Recognizing economic abuse as a form of domestic abuse, in 2013 via Chapter 526, New York enacted changes to the family offense laws of New York State to add certain forms of economic abuse to the definition of a family offense. At the time, the Social Services Law was inadvertently not amended. This bill would address this issue by expanding the definition of "victims of domestic violence" to include identify theft, grand larceny and coercion.

This bill passed the Assembly.

2. Suspension of Driving Privileges
A.7802 (Bichotte)/S.5370 (Hamilton)

Local social services districts in conjunction with the Department of Motor Vehicles are authorized to suspend the driver's license of an individual that is delinquent in child support payments. This legislation extends this provision until June 30, 2019.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 138.

III. SFY 2017-18 STATE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

A. Overview of the TANF Block Grant

The nation's welfare system was dramatically reformed with the enactment of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). The federal law adopted a "work first" approach, eliminated the entitlement to cash assistance, and imposed time limits, work requirements and sanctions on recipients. The cornerstone of the law was the creation of the TANF block grant, which provides states funds for their cash assistance and welfare-to-work programs.

New York received \$2.442 billion for the Family Assistance program through the federal TANF block grant. The 2017-18 state budget included approximately \$1.5 billion to support benefit payments to low-income New Yorkers.

B. TANF Programs

New York's TANF program has developed into the state's most critical system of support and assistance for children and families who struggle to make ends meet. In New York, programs including wage supplements, tax credits, job training and skill development, case management and counseling, child care and transportation were developed to assist families in need during the transition from poverty to self-sufficiency through work. For several years, New York has been authorized to utilize TANF funds not only for families eligible for federal assistance through the FA program, but also for families whose income does not exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

The 2017-18 budget included a Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) to provide local districts with a block grant. In order for a program to receive funding out of the TANF surplus, it must meet one of the four TANF purposes:

1. Provide assistance to needy families;
2. End the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
3. Prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Below is a breakdown of State spending of the TANF dollars for the SFY 2017-18:

CHILD CARE INVESTMENTS

The child care subsidy program provided by local social services districts enables an income-eligible parent or caretaker to work or engage in other approved activities by helping parent(s)/caretaker(s) to pay some or all of the cost of child care services. A \$310 million block grant was included in the budget to provide subsidies to parents.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITIONAL INITIATIVES

Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA): This program provides a monthly bus pass to allow eligible individuals from seven member counties to travel to and from work, or to participate in work related activities. In Wayne County, funds are used to support the transportation costs of individuals who use the WATS Demand Response Bus Services or TANF

work participation activities. Funds are also used to extend the WATS service hours to accommodate employees at Kraft. RGRTA was awarded \$82,000 in the budget.

Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP): The purpose of the TANF SYEP is to provide eligible youth with a quality employment and educational experience during the summer months. For many youth, this is their first introduction to the world of work. Valuable lessons which center on employment, including work ethic, appropriate workplace behavior, interaction with co-workers and supervisors, receiving a paycheck and money management, are learned. \$36 million was allocated to fund the employment program.

Domestic Violence Screening: Domestic Violence Screening involves identifying persons who are currently victims of domestic violence and offering temporary waivers from the public assistance (PA) program requirements where compliance with such requirements would place the victim and/or victim's children at greater risk of harm or make it more difficult for them to escape from abuse. \$3 million was budgeted to provide these services.

Wage Subsidy Program: Employers are reimbursed for wages and related benefits that the employer paid to the participant during the subsidy period. Using wage subsidies as a hiring incentive, nonprofit agencies work with employers to develop positions for individuals who have been unable to find employment through conventional means. This program was allocated \$475,000 to provide subsidies.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

ACCESS – Welfare to Careers: Metropolitan College's Welfare-to-Careers Consortium Program is collaboration among three major higher educational institutions in New York City (Metropolitan College, Medgar Evers College and Pace University). The Consortium affords participants the opportunity to earn their two-year degree or a baccalaureate degree, thereby greatly increasing their chances of gaining permanent, full-time employment at a sustainable salary level. \$800,000 was allocated for the ACCESS program.

Disability Advocacy Program: This program provides for the legal representation of individuals whose federal disability benefits have been denied or may be discontinued and received \$3.63 million in this year's budget.

FLEXIBLE FUND FOR FAMILY SERVICES (FFFS)

The FFFS encompasses a number of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs administered by local departments of social services which are funded with the Federal TANF Services Block Grant. The SFY 2016-17 allocations for FFFS is \$964 million.

APPENDIX A

2017 SUMMARY SHEET

SUMMARY OF ACTION ON ALL BILLS
REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON

SOCIAL SERVICES

<u>FINAL ACTION</u>	<u>ASSEMBLY BILLS</u>	<u>SENATE BILLS</u>	<u>TOTAL BILLS</u>
BILLS REPORTED WITH OR WITHOUT AMENDMENT			
TO FLOOR; NOT RETURNING TO COMMITTEE (FAVORABLE)	4	0	4
TO WAYS AND MEANS	15	0	15
TO CODES	2	0	2
TO RULES	2	0	2
TO JUDICIARY	0	0	0
TOTAL	23	0	23
BILLS HAVING COMMITTEE REFERENCE CHANGED			
TO <u>Mental Health</u>	1	0	1
TO _____	0	0	0
TO _____	0	0	0
TO _____	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	0	1
SENATE BILLS SUBSTITUTED OR RECALLED			
SUBSTITUTED		2	2
RECALLED		0	0
TOTAL		2	2
BILLS DEFEATED IN COMMITTEE	0	0	0
BILLS HELD FOR CONSIDERATION WITH A ROLL- CALL VOTE	6	0	6
BILLS NEVER REPORTED, DIED IN COMMITTEE	57	6	57
BILLS HAVING ENACTING CLAUSES STRICKEN	2	0	2
MOTIONS TO DISCHARGE LOST	0	0	0
TOTAL BILLS IN COMMITTEE	89	8	97
TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD	6		

APPENDIX B

**FINAL ACTION ON BILLS REPORTED BY THE
SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR	SENATE BILL # SPONSOR	FINAL ACTION	DESCRIPTION
A.237 Hevesi	S.1375 Carlucci	Third Reading Calendar	Would ensure that individuals on public assistance with a disability are provided appropriate and reasonable work accommodations according to the Americans with Disabilities Act.
A.245 Hevesi	S.1161 Carlucci	Referred to Ways and Means	Would expand the current income and resources exemptions that are allowable when applying for public assistance.
A.474A Paulin	S.1170A Carlucci	Chapter 275	Would allow local social services to offer financial literacy and personal finance to individuals receiving public assistance. The recommendation is to report.
A.585A Rosenthal L		Referred to Ways and Means	Would provide feminine hygiene products to females that need them in homeless shelters, excluding shelters in NYC.
A.1330 Weinstein	S.6293 Lanza	Passed Assembly	Would make the corresponding changes that were made to the Family Court Act regarding the expansion of certain crimes against victim of domestic violence to include identity theft, grand larceny and coercion.
A.1438 Jenne	S.6061 Kennedy	Referred to Ways and Means	Would standardize the child care co-payments across the state to be no greater than 20% of a families earned income.
A.1570 Barron		Referred to Ways and Means	Would eliminate the requirement to have a lien placed on a home as condition of eligibility for public assistance.
A.1589 Joyner		Referred to Ways and Means	Would require the department of labor to conduct a study that would measure the income adequacy in New York State by determining the amount of income necessary to meet the basic needs of families.
A.2084 Sepulveda	S.505A Diaz	Third Reading Calendar	Would require applicants for public assistance to be fully informed that they may be liable to reimburse the state for benefits received.
A.2155 Mayer	S.2951 Stewart- Cousins	Third Reading Calendar	Would require that when a local social services district amends their consolidated services plan (to either increase copayments, or lower eligibility for child care subsidies) they must first submit it to the local advisory board for approval.
A.3040A Hevesi		Third Reading Calendar	Would require local districts to allow participation in a 4-year post-secondary education program to count as work participation for purposes of an individual's public assistance employment requirement.

ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR	SENATE BILL # SPONSOR	FINAL ACTION	DESCRIPTION
A.3045 Hevesi	S.4195 Dilan	Third Reading Calendar	Would require that in instances where a certified DSS practitioner is evaluating an applicant, the opinion of the applicant's treating physician be considered in the determination, and that any denial must include a written explanation that presents evidence to support the certified practitioner's differing opinion.
A.3611 Hunter		Third Reading Calendar	Would require local social services districts, prior to imposing a sanction on a PA recipient for failure to comply with work rules, to confirm that the recipient is not exempt from the work requirement, and that the recipient had appropriate child care, transportation, and disability accommodations.
A.4166 Quart	S.2033 Squadron	Third Reading Calendar	Would require local districts to credit the value of an individual's time in the Work Experience Program (WEP) against any benefits legally recovered by the district.
A.4829 Titus	S.1938 Avella	Third Reading Calendar	Would modify the work requirements for single parent head of households receiving public assistance (PA) with a child under the age of 1.
A.4938 Rosenthal L.		Referred to Ways and Means	Would provide an increase to the monthly state assistance for food and vet expenses for guide dogs, hearing dogs and service dogs of individuals qualifying for social service benefits.
A.3844A Wright		Referred to Ways and Means	Would increase the amount of earned income that would be disregarded when doing public assistance budgeting from 42% to 67% and repeals the 185% standard of need, which is used to determine the benefit amount for a household.
A.5973 Solages	S.1318 Persaud	Referred to Ways and Means	Would allow districts to provide a \$80 diaper allowance for eligible parents every three months to assist in the purchasing of diapers for their children 2 years and under.
A.6715B Brindisi	S.6732 Serino	Veto memo 241 12/17	Would increase the SSI COLA for individuals and couples receiving enhanced residential care for the next five years.
A.7801 Hevesi	S.5393 Tedisco	Chapter 140	Provides for the extension of current exemptions of income and resources to qualify for public assistance programs.
A.7802 Bichotte	S.5370 Hamilton	Chapter 138	Provides for an extension authorizing local social services districts in conjunction with the Department of Motor Vehicles to suspend the driver's license of an individual that is delinquent in child support payments.

ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR	SENATE BILL # SPONSOR	FINAL ACTION	DESCRIPTION
A.7859 Hevesi	S.6433 Felder	Referred to Ways and Means	Would require that the shelter allowance for a person or family receiving federal low-income housing assistance, Section 8, be equal to the local agency maximum monthly shelter allowance prescribed by regulations of the New York State Department of Social Services.
A.8172 Hevesi	S.6017A Avella	Third Reading Calendar	Would allow a caregiver to exclude any unearned income of a child from the public assistance household.
A.8178 Hevesi		Referred to Ways and Means	Would create the Home Stability Support (HSS) program. HSS would be a new statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and who are facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions.

APPENDIX C

LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS/ROUNDTABLES

Services for Victims of Human Trafficking

June 7, 2017

Albany, New York

The focus of the hearing was to examine the effects human trafficking has had on current service delivery models and to gain a better understanding of the additional programs and services that may be needed to better address the complex needs of trafficking victims.

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) testified that since 2016, when legal and social service providers were allowed to make referrals for the purposes of obtaining state confirmation that a person is the victim of human trafficking (which helps a victim access needed services) – there was a 150% increase in the number of referrals. This increase in referrals is due to the fact that legal and social service providers often are the first contact a victim has with someone outside of the trafficking world.

With the increase in the number of referrals being made for victims, the next question turned to funding. One organization, Sanctuary for Families, which is New York State's largest provider of comprehensive services for victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and other gender-based violence, stated of the 392 clients that have disclosed their trafficking status, they only received funding to support 14 of those clients.

A lack of appropriate and safe supportive housing remains one of the biggest barriers to providing services to victims of human trafficking. The need for both emergency/crisis housing and dedicated long-term supportive housing was clearly stated by almost all the stakeholders at the hearing.

State Supplement Program

June 14, 2017

Albany, New York

The State Supplemental Program (SSP) is a state-funded financial assistance benefit paid to aged, blind, and disabled individuals. This monthly benefit is paid primarily to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are also income eligible for SSP. As of October 2014, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) had fully taken over the administration of the State Supplement Program, which was previously administered by the Federal government. Approximately 672,000 individuals are currently receiving the SSP benefit.

Stakeholders noted concerns with OTDA's initial opening of a recipient case, sections being incorrectly coded. Some of the errors are due to the fact that individuals completing the application form don't understand the questions they are required to answer. These errors can significantly affect the amount of a person's benefit.

Many stakeholders echoed the need for an increase to the SSP benefit, which hasn't had a significant increase since 1989.