



Office of Temporary
and Disability Assistance



Testimony
Barbara Guinn
Executive Deputy Commissioner
Before the
Legislative Fiscal Committees' Joint Budget Hearing
State Fiscal Year 2018-19 Executive Budget
Human Services

Tuesday, February 6, 2018
10:00a.m. in Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building

Good morning Chairpersons Weinstein, Young, Hevesi and Tedisco, and to the members of the Legislature. I am Barbara Guinn, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and I am honored to appear on behalf of Commissioner Sam Roberts to discuss the 2018-2019 Executive Budget and the important work of our agency.

OTDA's mission is to help vulnerable New Yorkers meet their basic needs and advance economically by providing opportunities for stable employment, housing and nutrition, working with the local social services districts we oversee.

We administer a range of activities to reduce homelessness, including homeless prevention services, oversight of emergency shelters, provision of rent supplements, construction and operating costs for homeless housing, and housing retention services. In 2017, we completed inspections of nearly 900 publicly-funded homeless shelters and as a result, improvements are being made in shelter conditions across New York State.

The State's Homeless Housing and Assistance Program awarded funds for nearly 550 units of supportive housing for the homeless this year-- part of the unprecedented commitment by the Governor and Legislature of \$10 billion toward creating and preserving more than 100,000 units of affordable housing and 6,000 units of supportive housing.

The Executive Budget advances this plan, and builds on these efforts by having OTDA work with local social services districts to establish comprehensive homeless services plans, including effective outreach services. Local districts will be required to engage with ongoing efforts, set data-driven goals that are tailored to community needs, and report regularly on progress.

Making sure no New Yorker goes hungry is another commitment the Governor takes to heart. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits help nearly 3 million low-income working people, older adults, and other New Yorkers feed their families each month. To further strengthen food security with this Budget, the Governor is launching a "no *student* goes hungry" initiative that requires food pantries on all SUNY and CUNY campuses to provide students access to healthy, locally-sourced meals, and includes expanded SNAP outreach efforts by OTDA.

Adequate home heating during times of cold weather is another basic need OTDA helps meet. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps over 1.3 million low- and moderate-income households afford heating costs and reduce energy needs through energy-efficiency investments. As a result of the cold weather this season, we've seen a 40% increase in requests for emergency heating assistance since the emergency benefit opened early last month.

I'm proud to announce today that OTDA is amending the HEAP State Plan to permit the issuance of an additional emergency benefit to better meet the increased need from this season's severe weather. This action will enable additional emergency heating benefits

to help about 18,000 households, and the State will dedicate an additional \$14 million in federal HEAP funds to support weatherization services for an additional 7,500 low-income households. This is the second year in a row we are dedicating additional HEAP funds to weatherization.

These efforts will help residents to keep the heat on through the cold winter months and achieve financial independence by lowering future energy costs as a result of weatherization.

The Executive Budget also includes resources to support OTDA's child support program, which collected more than \$1.8 billion on behalf of nearly 829,000 families last year. Child support is an important income source that helps families achieve financial stability, helps reduce child poverty, and encourages parents to be more active in the lives of their children.

The 2019 Budget provides \$40 million to OTDA for the Summer Youth Employment Program, which provides low-income youth with enriching and constructive work experience that can help even the playing field for future success. This investment represents a \$4 million increase from last year's program to account for the recent minimum wage increase to serve over 19,000 youth participants.

The Governor is committed to New York remaining a welcoming place for all, regardless of race, religion, country of origin, or economic status. OTDA oversees a range of services for refugees in New York State, which include help with housing, health, education and employment. OTDA staff were honored recently to welcome individuals arriving from hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and to provide information about available assistance. New York will continue to welcome new arrivals with open arms.

The Executive Budget supports comprehensive case management for vulnerable young people, especially immigrant youth. This investment is part of a larger proposal by the Governor to cut off the recruiting pipeline of violent gangs, in particular MS-13 on Long Island.

OTDA is proud of our work with the Governor and the Legislature to support strong families and communities, and keep New York a State of progress, opportunity and hope.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak with you about the Executive Budget and OTDA. I welcome your questions.