

TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

February 6, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the impact of the 2018-19 Executive Budget proposal on older New Yorkers and the aging services network in New York State. My name is Ann Marie Maglione and I am the Legislative Chair of the Association on Aging in NY, and the Director of the Orange County Office for the Aging. I would like to thank Senator Young and Assemblywoman Weinstein for chairing these hearings as well as extend our appreciation to Senator Serino and Assemblywoman Lupardo for their strong leadership on aging issues.

The Association on Aging in New York represents the 59 mostly county-based Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), also known as the Offices for the Aging, throughout New York State. These agencies design, fund, and coordinate programs, services and supports that allow older New Yorkers to live independently in their homes and communities of their choice, as well as provide support to their caregivers. The AAAs and their network of 1,200 community based partner organizations work hard to address the needs of older New Yorkers and their caregivers in a coordinated and holistic manner. The services provided by the aging network address prevention and the social determinates of health that help delay, and possibly prevent, the need for more medically intensive and costly health care services. Examples of these intensive and costly health care services include avoidable hospital readmissions, ER visits, and nursing home admissions.

The AAA's are required to participate in an annual local planning process and hear directly from older New Yorkers, caregivers and providers on what the needs and trends are in their community. From that input, a comprehensive plan is developed on how to best utilize federal, state and local dollars to address the needs of their community.

The ever-expanding 60+ population, which has different, more active and technologically focused expectations from the network, coupled with more complex needs of those in the 75+ and 85+ cohort has put a strain on New York's aging services network. In 2015 20% (3.7 million) of NYS residents were 60+ years old for the first time in history, due to longer life expectancies and the aging baby boom generation. This "age wave" will accelerate throughout the next three decades. By 2025, 51 counties will have 25% or more of their population over the age of 60.

With more people living longer than ever before, New York State faces opportunities and challenges if our delivery system does not evolve to incentivize earlier interventions and adequate funding for the services provided by the aging network.

We fully recognize the difficulties New York State faced last year during budget negotiations. We are mindful of the difficult task ahead for this year's budget, and look forward to working with you during the budget process to ensure the health, safety and wellness needs of older adults and their caregivers can be met.

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Our priorities for the 2018-19 Budget are as follows:

NY CONNECTS

NY Connects is a locally coordinated system of specialized information and assistance on long term services and support options for age 60+, individuals with physical disabilities, caregivers and providers. New York State has spent years building the multi-agency, cross systems approach to service access. Our area agencies handle hundreds of thousands of calls annually, more than 230,000 calls last year alone. Last fall, New York State launched a statewide public awareness campaign for NY Connects. Ads aired on multiple broadcast outlets, including radio, television and social media. These ads generated significant interest in NY Connects and succeeded in generating big upticks in calls to New York Connects.

Unfortunately, after years of building this system, it is already woefully underfunded. In 2016, the Tentative Allocation was \$33 million. The 2017 Final Allocation was only \$19.3 million – \$14 million less than what was promised. The Governor’s proposed 2018-19 Executive Budget only provides \$44.5 million over two years. The NY Connects system requires \$41 million annually in order to fully function - \$33 million for AAAs and \$8 million for the Independent Living Center run systems. This is two years in a row of significant funding cuts to a system that the state just built. What does this mean?

- Because of the reduction in funding in 2017, 280 jobs were either terminated, or left unfilled. Those in need of services have difficulty being assessed for services.
- People are falling through the cracks. Due to the increased call volume and more intensive call, they are left on hold and ultimately hang up after a long wait.
- NY Connects campaign launched this fall resulted in more people calling NY Connects in search of information and assistance. While this is wonderful, without the funding that was promised, this community based, multi-agency system will fail.

We respectfully request the NY Connects allocation in the Global Cap be adjusted to provide \$41 million annually or \$82 million over a two year period in order to sustain the system.

COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY

The Executive proposes to cut CSE by \$875,000 which is the amount the Legislature added last year. Total funding is proposed at \$28.9 million.

Waiting lists continue to grow as the population of older New Yorkers grows and there is an increased public awareness of these services through the promotion of NY Connects. Tens of thousands of older New Yorkers are on waiting lists for services such as transportation, EISEP, case management and home care. In order to fully address the waiting lists and ensure individuals are receiving the services they need, an additional \$24 million in funding is requested. In addition, the waiver of the local match should be incorporated into any additional appropriation.

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ELDER ABUSE

While we were pleased the Governor maintained funding for Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams so they may be sustained and expanded throughout the State, we are concerned with the \$200,000 cut to baseline elder abuse services. Elder abuse affects an estimated 260,000 older adults annually and is an underreported crime, with only 1 out of 24 cases reported. We respectfully request restoration of the \$200,000 as well as a \$10 million investment in community based efforts to address elder abuse.

Community-based programs are on the front lines for connecting with elder abuse victims and preventing elder abuse. They educate older adults about elder abuse prevention, provide social and legal services, and link victims to resources, such as law enforcement and APS. They work with families, help victims access public benefits, and run victim support groups.

HOME CARE CRISIS

Having a robust direct care workforce is paramount in achieving many of New York's goals, including Health Across All Policies, an Age Friendly state, DSRIP, MRT, and compliance with Olmstead. Right now, every county in New York State is experiencing a home care shortage that places the autonomy of individuals at-risk, and increases utilization of higher cost care such as emergency rooms and nursing homes. In addition, this prevents safe and appropriate discharges, resulting in preventable readmissions.

Thousands of New Yorkers are on waiting lists for home care due to a lack of access to aides and adequate funding to the network of area agencies on aging and their licensed subcontracted home care providers.

Without a workforce of home care providers the ability of elderly New Yorkers to remain in the community will simply be lost. A recent report by the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute found that nearly 9 in 10 home care workers are women, and their median age is 45. Nationally, home care workers earn a median income of \$13,800 annually qualifying them for multiple government benefits and no clear career path out of poverty.

The Association, and many of our members, provided testimony last year to the Assembly Aging and Health committees related to the home care workers shortage. We remain encouraged that the serious crisis continues to be examined by you and your colleagues. A recent survey of our members showed statewide challenges faced by the home care worker shortage and inability to fill the home care hours needed by older New Yorkers and their families.

Caregivers also provide uncompensated care in New York State to the tune of 63 hours of care per week. Older New Yorkers are also caregivers, providing 2.7 billion hours of unpaid care for loved ones annually. Innovative ways to support our caregivers, including self-directed care that

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compensates some family caregivers for caring for a close relative, is one unique approach that would benefit from more support and innovation.

Another option is to utilize the State Office for the Aging's flexible funding streams. Financial assistance could be offered to home care workers to increase the availability of aides, thereby helping those who are in need of home care and avoiding unnecessary nursing home admissions.

TRANSPORTATION

Access to transportation is paramount. In order to achieve the state's goals of proper discharge planning, care transitions, reduction of preventable hospital readmissions, and improved population health. Wait lists for transportation has increased dramatically over the past year. In addition, there are maintenance and operational needs for existing vehicles.

As we look towards the future, there are also many innovative transportation and mobility models that could be explored by localities. Many AAA and nonprofit aging network partners utilize a volunteer based assisted transportation program while others have incorporated a system of paid drivers and mobility managers. The expansion of ride sharing in upstate New York provides another viable option to access transportation in areas of the state that previously had limited options. Adequate funding is needed to expand and enhance existing and new options to meet the growing demand for rides for older New Yorkers, especially those who cannot afford transportation costs to meet their basic needs.

Legislation introduced by Senator Serino and Assemblywoman Lupardo (S.2155/A.8229) establishing an economically sustainable transportation program along with additional capital and federal 5210 transportation dollars directed to the aging network, would help address the transportation crisis and provide the flexibility for communities to fund transportation options that meet their needs.

The Association on Aging in New York is committed to working with Governor Cuomo and the Legislature to support New York's designation as the first "Age-Friendly" state in the nation by ensuring "health across all policies." This would require all state agencies to consider health and wellness outcomes in their policy decisions. The community based long term care services provided by the 59 Area Agencies on Aging and the 1,200 community base partner organizations are essential to reaching this achievement. Health across all policies and recognizing the need to ensure nonmedical supports are essential in meeting the goal of reducing expensive health care services, such as increased hospitalizations and unnecessary emergency room visits. Health across all policies also helps stabilize older adults to live independent in the community and not in expensive skilled nursing facilities.

As part of this initiative, our network and the services we provide must be included as part of DSRIP and the value based payment system. Connecting older New Yorkers to appropriate community based supports upon discharge from a hospital has proven to reduce hospital

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readmissions and save the health care system dollars. As you have heard many times before, community based services are not being included in these initiatives as a partner or in a meaningful way.

These long term care services and supports have already proved to be successful in keeping older New Yorkers in their homes and in the community. These mostly uncompensated services have benefited health insurance payers including Medicaid and Medicare immensely. In fact, efforts are currently underway in several areas of the state for aging network providers to contract with private health insurance companies to secure compensation for contributing to the health and well-being of their members.

Social determinants of health are finally being recognized as major factors to be included and compensated for our part in contributing to positive outcomes in the health and well -being of all age groups in our society.

Supporting efforts to include aging network providers and compensate them for their work, will allow counties and others to continue working for the older New Yorkers and their families. Business Acumen trainings that educate aging network providers with the tools they need to successfully contract with private payers will decrease costs to taxpayers by being compensated for the work they do to decrease costs for private insurers and in terms of the overall costs in Medicaid and Medicare.

We need your help in order to make this happen.

Thank you again for holding these important hearings and for allowing the opportunity for our Association to provide testimony. We very much look forward to working with you in the coming weeks and months to address all of these issues of critical importance to older New Yorkers and their families.