

**New York State Assembly
New York State Senate
FY 2019 Joint Legislative
Budget Hearing on Human Services**

With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving more than 300,000 older New Yorkers annually, LiveOn NY's members provide core senior services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. These services range from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, transportation, NORCs and NY Connects. LiveOn NY members also provide the crucial Expanded In Home Services for the Elderly Programs (EISEP) which include case management and homecare services for homebound seniors.

LiveOn NY's members are contracted largely through the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) to administer these vital programs that support seniors in their communities. Community based organizations, as well as the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), serve as the pillars that have made New York the first Age Friendly State, however, in order to truly embody this designation as well as support Governor Cuomo's Health Across All Policies initiative, additional investments in the aging service sector must be made.

Unfortunately, this cost-effective system is at risk of insolvency due to inadequate expense funding and outdated capital investments, which in-turn creates extreme difficulty in retaining quality staff. Seniors are falling through the cracks due to stagnation in the overall SOFA budget and at times, even dramatic cuts to this important network of programs. There's a human impact of this unfair budget - growing waiting lists, staff burnout, and a lack of a safety net for seniors. Currently, the waiting lists for Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) numbers an estimated 16,000 seniors statewide.

For the workforce associated with these community-based aging service providers, the need for increased funding could not be clearer. A 2017 report by the Human Services Council (HSC) found that human services workers make less than what is needed to cover expenses, with the annual pay throughout New York averaging less than \$30,000 annually, with up-state New York earnings averaging significantly less. Further, 60% of these workers reported having a family member utilize public assistance benefits such as SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, to make ends meet. Given these realities, it is not difficult to conject as to why staff recruitment and retention can be so difficult for aging service providers.

Organizationally, day-to-day realities have increasingly come to mirror the low-income clients that are served: while the participants live paycheck to paycheck, providers are living payroll to payroll. The HSC study also found that 60% of nonprofit service providers reported that state contracts rarely or never provided for the full cost of the contracted services. With 80% of budgets being funded almost entirely by governmental supports, it is clear as to why the solvency of the system is so at risk.



Making New York a better place to age

Despite these bleak findings, it *is* possible for New York State to turn the tide towards a more fair and equitable budget for seniors and the community-based services that support them.

It *is* possible for New York state to allow seniors to tap into the unquestionable momentum that is accumulated in later life. After years of working to build families, careers, and communities, Older New Yorkers throughout the state use this momentum to even further power up the economy, the political system, and their communities. In 2017 alone, seniors sent over 40,000 letters to local elected leaders to advocate for increase funding for senior services, a shining example of this point.

New York state benefits an estimated \$32 billion annually from unpaid caregiving services alone. This \$32-billion-dollar impact is thanks to the over 4 million family caregivers providing unpaid care, the estimated 125,000 grandparents raising grandchildren throughout New York, and the multitude of kinship caregivers supporting their loved ones. Beyond economic gains stemming from caregiving, seniors contribute an estimated 119 million hours of volunteerism in the state at an economic value of \$3.35 billion.

This incredible economic impact is likely to grow as the number of caregivers and older adults is projected to increase dramatically in the coming years. By 2040, it is estimated that the 60-plus-population will rise to an estimated 5.6 million individuals. These are 5.6 million individuals that should have the opportunity to be supported by a fully-funded network of community-based services in their neighborhoods and, in return, to thrive and continue to call New York their home.

Respectfully, LiveOn NY offers the following recommendations to meet this objective:

LiveOn NY's Recommendations

Decades of relative flat funding for the State Office for the Aging (SOFA) budget despite a growing senior population has placed the entire system of senior services at risk. To achieve the success of the Governor's Health Across All Policies Initiative, which coincides with the overall effort to affirm New York as the first Age Friendly state, strategic investments must be made in the aging services network. Among these investments, priority should be placed on the solvency of:

- New York Connects: No Wrong Door Initiative
- Community Services for the Elderly
- Services within Affordable Senior Housing
- Elder Abuse Prevention and Services
- NORCs: Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities
- A Dedicated Commitment to Supporting New York State's Nonprofit Human Services

Fully fund NY Connects/No Wrong Door at \$33 million annually

NY Connects is a locally coordinated system of specialized information and assistance around the long term services and support options for age 60+, individuals with physical disabilities, caregivers and providers. New York state has spent years building this multi-agency, cross systems approach to service access.

In New York City alone, the five agencies that serve as NY Connects providers in each borough collectively served over 16,000 callers in fiscal year 2017. In the summer of 2017, SOFA conducted a NY Connects public awareness campaign and increasing this already impressive call volume even more. In fact, the call volume from July 2017-October 2017 was 9,200 calls, which was up from 5,504 calls in that same time period the year prior. It should be noted that these calls were fielded with less staff due to a lack of funding.

With increased needs and awareness, the system remains woefully underfunded, and in fact experienced cuts in the past 6 months. The 2016 Tentative Allocation was \$33 million, while the 2017 Final Allocation was \$19.3 million, which is \$14 million less than what was promised. This cut required NY Connects providers in New York city to eliminate staff, and leave positions unfilled. People are falling through the cracks as they are left on hold and ultimately hang up after no response. *The FY19 Executive Budget allocates level funding of \$19.3 million, which does not reflect the actual need, and will continue to leave this system woefully underfunded and understaffed.*

LiveOn NY strongly urges the state to fully fund this program at \$33 million.

Community Services for the Elderly- Additional \$24 million annually

Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) funding is a powerful tool throughout the state due to its flexibility, which allows counties to utilize funds for the most critical and appropriate programming in their area. These services may include transportation, social adult day care, home delivered meals, case management and other similar supports.

Unfortunately, an estimated 16,000 older New Yorkers are on waiting lists for these critical supports, a number that, without investment, is likely to grow due to increased awareness from New York Connects and the rapidly growing aging population.

Despite these waiting lists, there were no new allocations in the 2019 Executive Budget and the Governor failed to carry over the \$875,000 legislative increase in the FY2018 Enacted Budget. To meet demand for these vital services, an additional \$24 million on top of existing funding is needed. What is important to note is that the impact of this funding will be both local and powerful, serving seniors who have been desperately waiting to be served.

Affordable Senior Housing with Services as a Pillar of Health Across All Policies Initiative

Service coordinators in senior housing residences have proven to reduce healthcare costs. In fact, LiveOn NY's member Selfhelp Community Services just released a study of the residents in their affordable senior housing program. The study utilized Medicaid data for residents in their housing in two zip codes in comparison to other seniors living in the same zip codes over two years.

The crucial research found that the seniors living in Selfhelp's affordable housing had much more positive outcomes including:

- 68% lower odds of being hospitalized

- \$1,778 average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization for Selfhelp residents, versus \$5,715 for the comparison group
- 53% lower odds of visiting an emergency room compared to a non-Selfhelp resident

In addition, a 2016 study of residents in affordable housing in Oregon showed that Medicaid costs declined by 16% just one year after seniors moved into affordable housing communities. Results also showed that primary care visits increased by 20%, while emergency room visits decreased by 18% and that properties with on-site health services produced the largest decrease in emergency room visits. A 2014 evaluation of the SASH program in Vermont revealed that growth in the annual total Medicare expenditures of program participants was lower by an estimated \$1,756-\$2,197 per person when compared to the growth of total Medicare expenditures in comparison groups.

Thus, in addition to an ongoing investment in capital funding for affordable senior housing, LiveOn NY, along with a coalition of other affordable housing advocates, LiveOn NY joins other senior services advocates and urges the state to establish a new \$10 million dedicated funding stream for services in existing and new affordable senior housing buildings throughout the entirety of the state. These services can help residents in remaining healthy and independent, supporting the overwhelming desire for seniors to age in place in their homes. This new program would be a strong pillar of the Governor Cuomo's Health Across All Policies Initiative.

Elder Abuse Prevention and Services

The hidden crisis of elder abuse is under-recognized, under-reported and under-prosecuted. According to one New York State study, approximately 260,000 cases of elder abuse go unreported each year. That means that for every one case of elder abuse reported, 23 cases are unreported. Financial exploitation is the most common form of elder abuse with only one out of 44 cases reported. Financial exploitation is costing New York state an estimated \$1.5 billion annually, according to the 2016 New York State Office of Children and Family Services study. 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; link victims to resources, such as law enforcement and APS; work with families; help victims access public benefits; and run victim support groups. The Rochester-based Enhanced Multi-Disciplinary Team (EMDT) model program has recovered more than \$1 million in court ordered restitution for financial elder abuse victims - more than the previous ten years combined. Funding to expand and sustain EMDTs throughout the State is crucial. We strongly urge the state to restore \$200,000 for elder abuse in the FY2019 final budget agreement.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities are increasingly popular programs that assist residential complexes and neighborhoods with a notably large cohort of older residents. Support is aimed at allowing these seniors to age independently in their homes, as is now desired by most older adults. This creative approach to supporting the aging in place model helps to delay hospitalization or nursing home placement, as well as supports the overall health and wellbeing of the older adult.

Despite the critical nature of these supports, funding uncertainty has recently clouded the road ahead for many NORCs. The recent cancellation of the state's Request for Proposal (RFP), has led to budgetary planning complications, implementation questions, and uncertainty around the statutory requirements set to begin January 1, 2018. Further, NYSOFA recently notified programs that funding will be set to FY2015-2016 levels for the 2018 calendar year, an effective cut for these programs. This notice comes in spite of the fact that the Legislature allocated an additional \$2 million in funding to the program through the Mortgage Insurance Fund for the upcoming fiscal year.

Concerns remain around the stability of the funding source and the ability to meet the needs of a rapidly growing aging population. LiveOn NY requests that the Legislature examine the recent contractual changes and impacts of such on the NORC providers, and work to protect the current funding level for N/NORC programs. Without action, these programs that older adults rely on to remain stably housed and in good health will become limited and stretched beyond capacity.

LiveOn NY advocates that the \$2 million allocated by the Legislature in the FY2017-2018 budget be utilized and restored. We further ask for an additional \$1 million allocation in new funding to the NORC program to support the sustainability and growth of this program as providers are trying to keep pace with the continuously growing senior population.

A Dedicated Commitment to Supporting New York State's Nonprofit Human Services

As a member of the Human Services Council (HSC), LiveOn NY also supports the Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York campaign, which is a Statewide coalition of more than 350 nonprofit human services providers, calling for increased State investment in the sector's workforce and infrastructure. Working under contract with the State, human services agencies provide crucial services to uplift New Yorkers from all walks of life. The State must ensure these organizations can continue their vital work.

LiveOn NY thanks Senator Sue Serino, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aging and Assemblywoman Lupardo, Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Aging for their leadership, and we look forward to working with the state legislature, Governor Cuomo, SOFA and the administration to make New York a better place to age.

About LiveOn NY:

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LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program that targets seniors in communities



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where benefits are most underutilized. This program helps to educate thousands of older adults, including those who are homebound, about food assistance options, as well as to screen and enroll those who are eligible for SNAP and SCRIE/DRIE.

LiveOn NY is also proud to administer the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program for the entire state. A grant project funded by the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL), this program is aimed at preventing Medicare fraud. SMP is modeled around recruiting and actively engaging senior volunteers to promote peer counseling, education, and assistance. This provides seniors opportunities to not only educate themselves on Medicare issues, but also to get involved and give back to their community. SMPs educate Medicare beneficiaries on how to protect, detect, and report Medicare fraud, through this, SMPs are able to empower beneficiaries to reduce healthcare costs caused by errors, abuse, and fraud.