



**New York State  
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Health  
January 29, 2020**

My name is Katelyn Andrews and I am the Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY. Thank you to both the Senate and the Assembly for the opportunity to testify today.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 100 community-based organizations that provide more than 1,000 programs serving over 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. These core services allow older adults to thrive in their communities and include senior centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, transportation, NORCs, case management and homecare. Through policy efforts, LiveOn NY advocates to increase funding and capacity for our members to meet the needs of older adults in their communities.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program that assists older adults in the communities where benefits are most underutilized. This helps to educate thousands of older adults each year about food assistance options, and screen and enroll those who are eligible for SNAP, SCRIE and a number of other benefits. Additionally, thanks to the generous support of the legislature, LiveOn also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program, an outreach program designed to empower older adults with information and resources to ensure all seniors can thrive in their later years.

In all, LiveOn NY works tirelessly to make New York a better place to age. We believe that aging creates momentum that drives our state forward, with older adults powering local economies, political systems, and communities. Seniors are the anchors in our neighborhoods, providing invaluable volunteerism, caregiving, and civic engagement across the state.

Unfortunately, despite older New Yorkers being an asset to our state, they have not been invested in as such. Today, New York's older adult population is greater than the total populations of 21 other states, yet you would not know it by the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) budget. For example, the total population of the state of Delaware is slightly less than 1 million persons receiving a state operating budget of \$4.45 billion. Whereas, New York State's older adult population is *more* than 1.6 million with the Executive Budget allocating NYSOFA only \$252 million in funding. This is \$2 million less than in FY20.

What this means is that while the older adult population continues to be the fastest growing demographic in our state and while the FY2021 state budget has increased by 1.9% overall, funding for seniors does not enjoy the same progress felt in other areas of the budget, decreasing by .8% overall.

An increasing population juxtaposed to a decreasing budget does not make fiscal sense, especially when this system represents a cost-effective infrastructure to mitigating future health care costs that would otherwise be imposed to our ballooning Medicaid and Medicare systems.

I will later discuss just how investments in NYSOFA can help to save Medicaid dollars, but first I would like to illustrate just why increased support for senior services is so critical to New York State ability to further assert itself as a bastion of progressive policy.

There is a reason that one in seven older adults are living in poverty throughout New York State.<sup>1</sup> Time acts as a compounding factor to inequities experienced throughout the life course. For an older woman of color, decades of earning less per dollar than their male counterparts compounds to inadequate savings to make ends meet when she reaches old age. Today 19% of African American seniors live in poverty, this must be addressed. For an LGBTQ senior, closed doors due to discrimination in the workplace or in housing compound fiscal insecurity throughout a lifetime. Today, studies have found one in five LGBT adults are living on less than \$12,000 a year, this must be addressed.<sup>2</sup> For an older Chinese immigrant, linguistic isolation and a lack of access to benefits lead to limited resources in old age. Today, Chinese seniors in New York City have an estimated annual income of \$7,000 a year, a number not vastly different from other older immigrant populations, this too must be addressed.<sup>3</sup> For all seniors, of whom the average social security payment is only \$1,470 a month, we as a state must do more to ensure adequate supports are available.

LiveOn NY lauds New York State's efforts thus far to make progress in addressing disparities, as improved opportunities for children and working age adults will hopefully lead to lower rates of poverty for the seniors of tomorrow; **however, we must all come together to support and redress the inequities facing the seniors of today.**

The following represents LiveOn NY's recommendations on just how the FY 2021 budget can push forward in supporting older New Yorkers and therefore address cumulative inequities. In each section I will also emphasize just how these investments can create savings to Medicaid and bolster the overall health care system.

### **\$12.7 Million in New Funding for Home-Delivered Meals (“Meals-on-Wheels”) System**

LiveOn NY is appreciative and encouraged by the \$798,000 in new funding in the Executive Budget allocated to NYSOFA's Wellness-in-Nutrition program, which funds home-delivered meals. This increase is a positive sign, however, it does not represent the full \$13.5 million in new funding that was needed to support this program going into this year. This means that LiveOn NY requests an additional \$12.7 million in funding to be included in the final budget, beyond what is allocated through the Executive Budget, to reach the full need.

The home-delivered meals program as a whole has been sorely underfunded for far too long. The inequity in the NYSOFA budget is a recipe for leaving older adults hungry, and may be best illustrated by the fact that in FY20, the Wellness in Nutrition (WIN) program—which funds the State's home-delivered meals program—received roughly the same amount of funding as in FY14, more than five years prior.<sup>4</sup> Adjusting for inflation, this gap in funding becomes even more stark, creating a lack of ability to keep pace with rising programmatic expenses, such as raw food costs and personnel expenses. Further, some localities have been forced to create waiting lists for meals due to lack of funds, while

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nycfuture.org/research/new-yorks-older-adult-population-is-booming-statewide>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.justiceinaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/How-Can-Legal-Services-Better-Meet-the-Needs-of-Low-Income-LGBT-Seniors.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nycfuture.org/research/planning-for-new-yorks-aging-immigrant-population>

<sup>4</sup> In 2017 alone, 12,940,776 meals were served to older adults across the state through NYSOFA's home-delivered meals program.

other providers have run a deficit in order to meet the full need.

With one in four older adults found to be nutritionally at-risk, the state's foremost program to supporting homebound and frail older New Yorkers cannot remain at risk as well. \$13.5 million in new funding would account for the increase in consumer price index (CPI), the increase in meals served, and the lack of cost of living adjustments (COLA) dating back to 2016.

The effects of this investment will not only improve the quality of life for New York's seniors, but are likely to generate significant cost-savings annually to Medicaid. According to a 2009 Brown University study, by investing roughly \$6 million to New York's home-delivered meals program, increasing capacity to serve more older adults, **the estimated annual savings to Medicaid would be more than \$11 million—a total offset savings of at least \$5.5 million.** Savings generated would be the result of delayed nursing home placement, allowing older adults to remain in their homes and their communities as is preferred.

### **Full Funding for New York Connects/No Wrong Door**

NY Connects is a locally coordinated system of specialized information and assistance on long term services and support options for individuals age 60+, individuals with physical disabilities, caregivers and providers. New York has spent years building the multi-agency, cross systems approach to service access. In New York City alone, the five agencies that serve as the NY Connects provider in each of the boroughs served over 16,000 callers in fiscal year 2017, as the program was just beginning to take shape. By FY19 this number had already grown to more than 20,000 calls.

**As the state convenes discussions to address Medicaid cuts, we recommend the NY Connects program to be held harmless and not experience future cuts.** This program assists caregivers, professionals, and older New Yorkers alike in finding the level of support that is right for their needs. One benefit to this type of support is the assurance that individuals are more aware of the community-based services that might be available to them and therefore negate the premature need for higher levels of service.

### **\$10 Million in New Funding for Affordable Senior Housing with Services and Maintain \$125 Million in Affordable Senior Housing Capital Funding**

LiveOn NY would like to reiterate our thanks to the Administration and the entire legislature for the investment made in 2017 of new affordable housing capital funding. This \$125 million investment, slated to be made over five years, continues to be included in the FY21 budget and will help ensure that seniors have access to safe, affordable and reliable housing options. Given the significant need, LiveOn is hopeful that a significant portion of this funding has already been allocated to developers to begin constructing homes for older adults across the state, including in New York City. We look forward to learning the details of how this \$125 million has been or will be invested.

Beyond this capital investment, LiveOn NY urges \$10 million in new funding to be invested this fiscal year to support seniors by providing service coordinators in both newly constructed and existing senior residences. Service coordinators enable older adults to thrive by assisting in making connections and referrals to key services, as well as by promoting overall socialization.

**Further, service coordinators in senior housing residences have proven to reduce health care costs, including reducing Medicaid expenditures.** One of LiveOn NY’s members, Selfhelp Community Services, released a study of the residents in their senior affordable housing program. Their study compared Medicaid data for residents in their housing in two zip codes and compared it to other seniors living in the same zip codes over two years. This research found that seniors living in Selfhelp’s affordable housing had demonstrably 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-resident

Additionally, 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 Support & Services at Home (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 Medicare expenditures in comparison groups. These examples demonstrably show that an investment in service coordinators makes good fiscal sense, while supporting older New Yorkers.

### **Medicaid Redesign Team II**

Much of LiveOn NY’s testimony thus far has focused not only on the ways that New York State can better support older New Yorkers, but investments that can simultaneously reduce Medicaid expenditures. With this in mind, we would like to put on the record that **LiveOn NY strongly encourages the inclusion of at least one expert that directly represents the human services sector on the new formation of the Medicaid Redesign Team.** It is particularly important for community-based organizations to have representation, as the programs run by this sector have a significant impact on the overall health of the individuals served and will best understand how communities could be affected by any potential cuts. Further, it is critical that future cuts are not made in a way that has adverse health impacts, disproportionately impacts low-income seniors, or puts community-based non-profits financially at risk.

### **New Funding for Cost of Living Adjustments**

The Executive budget explicitly disallows the inclusion of a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for NYSOFA services, stating that the “director shall not apply any cost of living adjustment for the purpose of establishing rates of payments, contracts or any other form of reimbursement.” This language is included for the Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly (CSE), and WIN programs, just as it was last year and the year prior, meaning that if enacted key human service employees will have gone a full three years without raises to help keep pace with rising cost of living. Choosing to not fund COLAs is a recipe for ensuring that this workforce, which is predominantly female and disproportionately women of color, will have diminished ability to provide

for themselves as they reach old age.<sup>5</sup> Heartbreakingly, without the state ensuring competitive, annually increasing salaries, the workforce will likely age to reflect the older population they now serve: older New Yorkers without the means to make ends meet. **The state must remove this budget language and add sufficient funding to CSE, EISEP, WIN, and all human services programs to ensure a full COLA increase can be provided.**

### **Other Items**

**LiveOn NY applauds the continued \$500,000 investment in the Rochester-based Enhanced Multi-Disciplinary Team (EMDT) model program**, which has recovered more than \$1 million in court ordered restitution for financial elder abuse victims—more than the previous ten years combined. The State should look to expand this EMDT model throughout the State.

We also applaud the continued funding of \$15 million annually to address unmet needs for seniors across the state, particularly through the EISEP program. Further, LiveOn NY appreciates the \$868,000 in new funds for in-home and community services for older adults added to the CSE program in this Executive Budget. **Above this, LiveOn NY recommends increased investments in both EISEP and CSE as the population served by these programs are at significant risk of nursing home placement.** For example, the average customer served by the Aging Network is an 83-year-old female who is low-income, lives alone, has 4+ chronic conditions, 2 activities of daily living (ADL) limitations and 6 independent activities of daily living (IADL) limitations. The Aging Network is able to serve these individuals and help them and their families maintain autonomy for less than \$10,000 annually.

**LiveOn NY also recommends that \$325,000 in funding be restored to support classic and neighborhood NORCs**, which support older residents' ability to age in place. This funding is necessary to maintain the current levels of service, in a program that integrates health and social service activities in a cost-effective manner.

### **In Conclusion**

At LiveOn NY, we are especially proud to recommend investments with proven cost-savings to Medicaid and health care more broadly, while remaining quality and mission-driven in approach. We look forward to seeing a budget that reflects the needs of all New Yorkers and supports the varied needs of a diverse and rapidly growing older adult population. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

**Questions:** Contact Katelyn Andrews, [kandrews@liveon-ny.org](mailto:kandrews@liveon-ny.org), 212-398-6565 x.244

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<sup>5</sup> <https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Initiatives/RestoreOpportunityNow/RONreport.pdf>