



**AARP New York**

**Testimony before the Joint Legislative Budget  
Committee Human Services Hearing**

**February 5, 2026**

## **Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Human Services portion of the Executive Budget for the SFY 2026-27. AARP is a social mission organization with 2.2 million members statewide, and we advocate on behalf of all New Yorkers ages 50 and older. AARP is focusing on specific needs and priorities of this committee. However, our legislative priorities agenda, which we will share with all legislators, provides a deeper analysis of what is needed for older New Yorkers outside of health and human services. This testimony is focused on the needs of older adults and the challenges they face, particularly in accessing services, caregiving, and long-term care.

## **Background - The Growing Older Adult Population**

New York's older adult population is booming. According to a report from the Center for an Urban Future<sup>1</sup>, there are now 3.56 million New Yorkers age 65-plus. This is an almost 30% increase over the last decade. Nearly 1 in 5 New Yorkers (or 18%) are ages 65 and over.

Concerningly, the rate of poverty among older adults also is rapidly increasing. Statewide, the number of older adults living in poverty increased by almost 50% over the last decade, while the number of people under age 65 living in poverty decreased by 22%. Almost 50% of the older adult population reported no retirement income. The number of older New Yorkers who are employed increased by 53.5% over the past decade, compared to the 2.9% increase in the number of employed New Yorkers under the age of 65 during the same period. Affordability is a major concern for older New Yorkers and their loved ones.

## **Aging in Place and Family Caregivers**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nycfuture.org/research/the-emerging-financial-security-crisis-facing-older-adults-across-new-york>

AARP research consistently shows that older adults want to remain in their own homes and communities as they age.<sup>2</sup> A critical part of enabling older adults to age at home is ensuring they have access to help with activities of daily living, and that family members caring for aging loved ones have support and respite to assist in their labor of love.

Family caregivers play a key role in determining an older person's ability to remain in their home and community and out of far costlier, taxpayer-funded institutional care settings, such as nursing homes for as long as possible. Home services can be a lifeline for many of the 4.04 million family caregivers statewide<sup>3</sup>, a majority of whom are women and who provide an estimated 2.1 billion hours of care for an economic value of \$39 billion annually.<sup>4</sup> It has been found that 64% of caregivers work jobs while providing care, 36% have experienced a negative financial impact, and 40% engage in high-intensity caregiving.<sup>5</sup> These family caregivers need support to be able to keep caring for their loved ones.

The State Office for the Aging (SOFA) administers non-Medicaid programs that enable middle-class older New Yorkers to remain in their homes while supporting their family caregivers. These programs and services include transportation, adult day care, home-delivered meals and respite. Aging advocates from all over the state worked with agencies across the administration to create the Master Plan for Aging (MPA) that outlined the funding required to continue these services, along with other funding that is needed to address the needs of the growing older adult population. SOFA analyzed data about the cost to serve clients through its programs and found significant cost savings. By allowing people to remain at home and delaying

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/livable-communities/housing/2024-home-community-preferences/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/topics/ltss/family-caregiving/cgus-2025-caring-across-states/caregiving-in-the-us-2025-spotlight-on-new-york.doi.10.26419-2fpfi.00383.072.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2023/3/valuing-state-estimates.doi.10.26419-2Fppi.00082.009.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/topics/ltss/family-caregiving/cgus-2025-caring-across-states/caregiving-in-the-us-2025-spotlight-on-new-york.doi.10.26419-2fpfi.00383.072.pdf>

or preventing the use of Medicaid, a \$15 million investment in SOFA programs can result in \$50 million in savings to the Medicaid program.<sup>6</sup>

### **Budget Request**

**AARP New York urges the Legislature to implement Proposal 50 in the MPA that will fund essential services for older New Yorkers.**<sup>7</sup> This proposal is for \$173.5 million that will help address the needs of the growing older adult population. The funding covers money to reduce the waitlist for home and community-based services, increase funding for the long-term care ombudsman program that provides nursing home oversight, invests in sustainable nutrition supports, and more to improve the lives of older New Yorkers and their family caregivers. Below is the full list of funding requested in this proposal:

1. \$35 million allocated to:
  - a. Reduce waiting lists.
  - b. Enhance the home care rate for personal care I and II.
  - c. Expand personal care and case management.
  - d. Provide additional transportation support.
  - e. Combat social isolation.
  - f. Increase access to social model adult day services so caregivers are able to have meaningful employment.
  - g. Expand health and wellness services and evidence-based interventions.
  - h. Other locally determined needs.
2. Invest in sustainable nutrition support - \$43 million.
3. Invest in Aging Services network workforce - \$20 million.
4. Expanding eligibility to younger-onset Alzheimer's and to age 50 for caregiver and respite support – \$26 million
5. Provide annual appropriation for technology access - \$5 million.
6. Provide annual appropriation for New York's Lifespan Respite Care Programs - \$1 million
7. Provide annual appropriation for elder abuse education and outreach - \$3 million.
8. Provide increased funding for the New York State Health Insurance Program (SHIP), known in New York as the Health Insurance Information, Counseling, and Assistance Program (HIICAP) - \$5.5 million
9. Provide an increase in funding for state legal assistance programs - \$3 million.
10. Provide an increase in funding for the long-term care ombudsman program - \$10 million.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://aging.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/08/new-yorks-program-to-address-unmet-need.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://planforaging.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/07/mpa-final-report-6-30-25.pdf>

11. Provide an annual appropriation for Aging and Disability Resource Centers - \$20 million.
12. Provide reskilling and training for older individuals who wish to return to employment - \$2 million.

We appreciate the Governor's recognition and commitment to addressing the needs of middle-class older New Yorkers. The Executive Budget renewed the previous year's \$35 million additional investment for home and community-based services. However, as more older adults are living in poverty and struggling to make ends meet, current funding levels do not meet the demand for these cost-effective services.

### **Adequately Funding Nursing Home Oversight**

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) advocates for residents of long-term care facilities, addresses complaints, and improves quality of care. This program is run by SOFA and serves about 160,000 residents across 1,400 nursing homes and adult care facilities. The program's stated goal is to maintain a regular presence, at least one visit per week in every facility, because consistent, on-site engagement enables ombudsmen to build trust with residents; identify patterns affecting care; work effectively with facility staff; and protect residents' rights, including preventing abuse and neglect. However, current funding levels are insufficient to meet this mandate: data from July-September 2025 shows that less than 40% met the weekly visit goal, underscoring a critical gap between program requirements and the resources available to fulfill them.<sup>8</sup>

### **Budget Request**

As noted, the request to fully fund aging services was a recommendation included in the MPA, along with more than one hundred other proposals. \$10 million of the proposed \$173.5

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<sup>8</sup> <https://aging.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2026/01/quarter-4-2025-broken-out-by-facility-type-visits-by-region.pdf>

million is allocated to the LTCOP to help the program reach 100% of facilities weekly. Many of these are common-sense, actionable proposals that will improve the lives of current and future older New Yorkers. We were pleased to see the Governor announce plans in her State of the State to create a one-stop shop for older adults to access benefits for which they are eligible with the goal of creating a single, streamlined application, another proposal included in the MPA. I urge the Governor and the Legislature to work together to implement the full vision of the MPA to ensure New York is a state where people can live and age with dignity.

### **Protect SNAP Benefits for Older Adults**

Over 916,000 older adults in our state are facing food insecurity<sup>9</sup>, and when older adults experience food insecurity, they are more likely to have poorer health outcomes, including diabetes, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, asthma, and depression. SNAP participation among older adults has been linked to fewer hospital and long-term care admissions, improved medication adherence, and lower overall healthcare costs.

When older adults lose SNAP benefits to skimming, they are at an elevated risk of negative health outcomes. This can happen when electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards are swiped at places where fraudsters installed illegal devices that read the data from the magnetic strips on the card. The money people rely on to survive is stolen by scammers and it is very difficult to recoup those funds. Although SNAP skimming victims can be of any age, it's important to note that older adults are targeted in many ways, and they deserve protection. It is essential to make sure that when skimming does occur, assistance is available to the victims so that they can provide food for themselves and their families.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/topics/health/food-insecurity/over-10-million-households-adults-ages-50-older-participated-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap-fiscal-year-2023.doi.10.26419-2fpfi.00106.004.pdf>

## **Budget Request**

AARP supports the additional \$16.8 million in state funding allocated to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in the Executive Budget to upgrade the current magnetic strips on EBT cards to a chip system that helps prevent benefits from being stolen. This upgrade will protect older New Yorkers from losing the funds they need to feed themselves and their families.

## **Conclusion**

The older adult population is growing while increasingly living in poverty. The 2026-27 enacted budget must address the needs of older New Yorkers by providing funding for non-Medicaid services that allow them to remain in their homes and communities while shoring up programs that advocate on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities. The Master Plan on Aging was designed by relevant stakeholders to make the state a better place to age for all and must be fully implemented. Additionally, keeping the most vulnerable New Yorkers safe with reliable, affordable utilities is a priority. We urge the Legislature to accept investment in these essential programs and services. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony.