

**Testimony of
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**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
Conducted By
Senate Finance Committee
Assembly Ways & Means Committee**

**Wednesday, February 16, 2011
Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York**

Good morning Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblyman Farrell, distinguished members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees, Assemblyman Dinowitz and Senator Valesky. My name is Greg Olsen and I am the Acting Director of the New York State Office for the Aging.

Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget charts a course that will lead this State to recovery by eliminating historic budget deficits and transforming the way that government does business. The Governor has charged me, as he has done with the heads of all State agencies, with helping to achieve these objectives in a fair and responsible manner. At the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), we will restructure the way in which services are delivered so that they remain person-centered and responsive to the needs of those we serve, but we will do so more efficiently. The agency has strong partnerships within the community that serves and advocates for older adults, and I will look to them to help us carry out our core mission and achieve the goals established by the Governor.

The New York State Office for the Aging promotes and administers programs and services for the 3.7 million New Yorkers who are 60 years of age and older. NYSOFA's core mission is to help older adults remain independent for as long as possible through advocacy, the development and delivery of person-centered, consumer-oriented, and cost-effective policies, programs and services. In carrying out this mission, NYSOFA provides leadership and direction to 59 Area Agencies on Aging, and to the network of public and private organizations which serve and help empower older adults and their families.

Governor Cuomo's 2011-12 Executive Budget thoughtfully balances the need to continue supporting critical programs while restructuring other programs to be more performance-based so that the funding that is available will produce better outcomes.

The proposed budget for NYSOFA maintains our core programs and services, assuring that those we serve continue to receive cost-effective, quality services that support their independence. As such, the Executive Budget preserves funding for key programs including Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP), which provides non-medical in-home services, case management, respite and ancillary services to the frail elderly, most of whom are low-income but not eligible for Medicaid; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is used primarily for home delivered meals to frail elderly who are unable to prepare meals for themselves; and the Community Services for the Elderly

Program (CSE), which is designed to improve the ability of communities to assist elderly people who need help in order to remain in their homes and to participate in family and community life.

In addition, other programs that provide for education, advocacy and support are also funded at last year's levels. These programs include the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP), the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) and Caregiver Resource Centers (CRC), which assist caregivers through training programs, support groups, counseling and linkages to other community services.

As part of the initiative to recalibrate our resources with programmatic needs, the Executive Budget establishes a new local competitive performance grant program. Grants under the new program will be awarded through a competitive process pursuant to criteria developed NYSOFA. The program will give NYSOFA the opportunity to re-evaluate priorities and achieve savings by reprioritizing programs. Now more than ever, it is important to examine our mission and ensure that we are using our funding in a way that best meets priorities. Much of the process will include input from our network, including guidance from the counties and the constituents that are served, to help guide the decision making. This process will foster competition, transparency, and accountability as well as allow us to measure performance.

The Governor has also charged us, as he has his other agencies, to find smarter, more efficient ways to deliver our services. In fact, NYSOFA has been doing that and will continue to do so. We have, through a variety of strategic partnerships and with our county area agency on aging partners:

- Promoted the use of evidence-based disease prevention and chronic disease management interventions through grants intending to serve approximately 5,000 older New Yorkers with chronic conditions.
- Enhanced coordination with the state Department of Health to promote healthy living to older New Yorkers and worked successfully with the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services to pilot test the use of an alcoholism-specific screen in aging services programs.
- Developed a “community empowerment” agenda to assist communities to better plan for an older population through inclusive planning and access to technical assistance and replicable good practices.
- Established *Livable New York*, to prepare and make available to cities, towns and villages model planning and zoning guidelines to foster mixed-use, age-

integrated communities in urban, suburban and rural areas of the state. The Livable New York Academy is a three-step education, training and technical assistance process created by NYSOFA to empower and assist communities in promoting age-integrated communities and improving the livability and quality-of-life for all residents.

The State's fiscal situation provides an opportunity to deploy state agencies and their resources differently. NYSOFA has embraced this idea and we see opportunities today and in the future where we can help communities better understand their specific demographics and change drivers, organize stakeholders, assess in a comprehensive way their communities and prioritize identified issues for action based on the community assessment. Now is the time when the community can take the lead and the state can act as a resource.

Again, thank you for having me here today and I welcome your questions and comments.