

**Testimony of
Greg Olsen, Acting Director
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the Aging**

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

**Thursday, January 30, 2020
Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York**

Good afternoon, Chairpersons Krueger and Weinstein, Chairpersons May and Bronson and all the distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly standing committees. I am Greg Olsen, Acting Director of the New York State Office for the Aging, and I'm honored to testify on the portions of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's proposed budget that affect older New Yorkers.

Governor Cuomo's commitment to older New Yorkers is unprecedented, and New York is viewed as the trailblazer nationally for the work we are doing to support older adults and their families. Our approach is so much broader than one agency—it is about making New York the healthiest state in the nation through a multi-agency, coordinated effort focused on improving physical and behavioral health; implementing preventive health care strategies; embedding healthy aging principles into planning, procurement, and policies to change the built environment; and much more. Utilizing the state's 2019-2024 Prevention Agenda as the umbrella, and instituting a Health Across all Policies approach, all New York State agencies are incorporating health considerations into our planning, programs, and initiatives. We have been charged to work together and consider how all of our policies further our efforts as the first age-friendly state. This approach will have a significant positive impact on New York's older population.

Under the Governor's leadership, New York State became the first state in the nation to receive the age-friendly designation by AARP and the World Health Organization because we rank high in the eight domains of age-friendly, livable communities, and because we are implementing a comprehensive plan to systematically build age-friendly and smart growth principles into how government operates and functions. We are truly leading the nation in our collaborative and thoughtful approach.

The FY 20-21 Executive Budget continues its ongoing commitment to older New Yorkers. It includes:

- Continuing the historic \$15 million investment contained in last year's enacted budget for older New Yorkers across the State who were awaiting services;
- Continuing the \$1.5 million increase to Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) that was contained in last year's enacted budget;
- Continued support for New York Connects systems reforms by providing \$27.2 million for statewide operation of these reforms to more easily access long term care services and supports,
- Maintaining \$500,000 that is used to draw down more than \$2 million in federal funds to combat elder abuse and financial exploitation of older adults;
- Provisions by the Governor to lower prescription drug prices, which will result in reduced costs for older adults; and
- Maintaining all core funding at last year's level.

The 20-21 Executive Budget proposal will continue to help hundreds of thousands of older New Yorkers maintain their independence; support the loved ones who care for them; reduce future Medicaid costs; and further demonstrate why New York is the first-age friendly state in the nation.

The State Office for the Aging and our network does not stop there—we understand the need to continually do more to meet new and emerging needs—and we work to meet these needs. Through innovative partnerships with foundations, state and community partners, and our own efforts, we are expanding services and testing new delivery models. These include:

- Advancing our state age-friendly work via grants to help communities replicate Executive Order #190 at the county level; bring new municipalities into AARP’s network of age-friendly communities; stand up five Age Friendly Regional Technical Assistance Centers; and implement a learning collaborative to assure the success of the grantees;
- Implementing our private pay program as a result of receiving the statutory authority in last year’s enacted budget;
- Working with Performing Provider Systems (PPS) and health plans to purchase services from our network that address the social determinants of health;
- Significantly expanding our state certification and skills-based trainings for staff who deliver services to older adults;
- Expanding our partnership with OTDA to provide targeted nutrition counseling and nutrition education in low-income target areas in the state;
- Working with the Village to Village network and the Albany Guardian Society to seed local village movements that organize neighbors helping neighbors, and building a regional Village Technical Assistance Center in the Capital District;
- Participating in a statewide collaborative to educate the public on the devastating impact of sepsis;
- Reducing social isolation via the use of animatronic pets;
- Working with the New York State Council on the Arts to bring arts and arts education to senior centers and libraries in three regions to improve health; reduce social isolation; improve cognitive function; and support professional artists;
- Working to better understand the fiscal impact that caregiving has on the public and private workforce and on health care costs; and
- Working with the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to provide training and education resources that will help us better serve individuals with disabilities who are aging into our services.

NYSOFA will continue to engage state agencies, private partners, not-for-profits, and other community-based organizations to serve New York’s older population as effectively as possible.

Thank you—I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and I am happy to answer any questions.