

**Testimony of  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director  
New York State Office for the Aging**



# **New York State Office for the Aging**

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

**Tuesday, February 5, 2013  
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, Chairperson Millman and Chairman Adams. My name is Greg Olsen and I am the Acting Director of the New York State Office for the Aging.

Governor Cuomo's third Executive Budget expands on the historic reforms enacted the past two years to continue building a *new* New York. As a result of bipartisan cooperation over the past two years, the State was able to close the current deficit without broad cuts, new taxes, fees or gimmicks. At the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), we are continuing to rethink and restructure the way in which services are delivered and how oversight and monitoring are implemented so that the services we administer with our county and community partners are person-centered and responsive to the needs of those we serve. The agency has developed new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental organizations, and continues to focus on strengthening and expanding existing partnerships within the communities that serve and advocate for older adults.

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. In carrying out this mission, NYSOFA provides leadership and direction to 59 county based Area Agencies on Aging and a network of over 1,200 public and private organizations which serve and help empower older adults and their families.

Governor Cuomo's 2013-2014 Executive Budget continues its commitment to our core programs and services, assuring that those we serve continue to receive cost-effective, high quality services that support their independence and prevent more costly services. As such, the Executive Budget preserves funding for key programs including the Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP), which provides non-medical in-home services, case management, respite and ancillary services to frail older adults, most of whom are low-income but not eligible for Medicaid; the Wellness in Nutrition Program (formerly known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)), which funds home delivered and congregate meals and provides nutrition counseling and education to frail older adults who are unable to prepare meals for themselves; the Community Services for the Elderly Program (CSE), which is designed to improve the ability of communities to assist older adults who need help in order to remain in their homes and to participate in family and community life, and NY Connects: *Choices for Long Term Care*, a statewide, locally based "no wrong door" that provides one stop access to free, objective and comprehensive Information and Assistance (I&A) on long term services and supports.

We have, through a variety of strategic partnerships and with our county area agency on aging and other partners accomplished a lot in 2012 including:

- Serving over 560,000 individuals statewide through all our programs and services and used state and federal resources to leverage an additional \$200 million in program and service funding through county contributions, cost sharing, participant contribution and private fundraising.

- Launching the Legal Services Initiative in partnership with the New York State Office of Court Administration, the New York State Bar Association, and the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to promote awareness among individuals of their legal rights, increase access to affordable legal services and the availability of legal assistance, increase understanding among members of the legal field of the needs and the characteristics of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers and develop a strategic plan of action to identify and address gaps in access to legal services.
- Partnering with the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to expand access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for older adults, to community nutrition sites for SNAP participants and to information on public benefit programs and services offered through the aging services network through the prescreening website, [www.myBenefits.ny.gov](http://www.myBenefits.ny.gov).
- Partnering with the Office of Children and Families/Adult Protective Services to be one of 5 states to be awarded an innovative grant to establish an Evidence Based Intervention to address financial exploitation and other forms of elder abuse.
- Helping over 34,000 consumers apply for and receive over \$70 million in federal benefits that assist them in paying for prescription drugs and other out-of-pocket health costs such as co-pays, premiums and deductibles through the NY Connects and our Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP), exceeding our goal by almost 400%.
- Partnering with DOH and the State University of New York at Albany Center for Excellence in Aging and Community Wellness, and numerous community partners to develop and expand the infrastructure to deliver evidence based health promotion interventions, such as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.
- Partnering with NYSERDA to provide resources to the area agencies on aging to help older adults apply for the EMPOWER Program, to provide assistance in making their homes more energy efficient and thereby lowering their energy costs.

As you can see from these examples, NYSOFA has been proactive in working to improve our services and advocacy for older adults by increasing partnerships and integrating our work with other agencies and entities to maximize the utilization of resources. We look forward to continuing down this path to create systems that are seamless for the consumer and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my comments. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.