



**Office of Temporary
and Disability Assistance**



**Testimony
Michael Perrin
Executive Deputy Commissioner
Before the
Legislative Fiscal Committees' Joint Budget Hearing
State Fiscal Year 2017-18 Executive Budget
Human Services**

Wednesday, February 8, 2017
10:00a.m. in Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building

Good morning Chairwoman Young, Chairmen Farrell, and Tedisco, and to the members here today.

I'm Michael Perrin, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Commissioner Samuel D Roberts is sick and is unavailable. I'm honored to be here to discuss the Executive Budget for 2017-2018 and the important work of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

I. Background

Our mission at OTDA is to protect and lift up New York's most vulnerable residents and help them achieve self-sufficiency. Financial independence is a powerful feeling. It gives a person the confidence they need to be able to provide not only for themselves, but also for their families. It sets their children on a path of success, putting the next generation in a better position to succeed than the last. We want all New Yorkers to experience that feeling.

OTDA administers vital State programs for those temporarily unable to work, and for many working families who simply aren't able to make ends meet. These programs provide food and heating assistance to people who need it; create supportive housing units for individuals and families; inspect homeless shelters to ensure safety and security; oversee the State's child support enforcement program; as well as assist refugees and immigrants in search of the American Dream. All of these efforts share a common goal: to help individuals and families meet immediate, essential needs and quickly get back on their feet again.

II. OTDA's Achievements and Plans for FY2017/ 2018

OTDA has realized remarkable successes: Just this past year alone, OTDA opened the doors to over 540 new supportive housing units. SNAP benefits now enable over 1.6 million households to purchase healthy foods at their local grocery store and at more farmers' markets than ever before. Progress is everywhere. But we have more to do and the Budget proposal advances our mission.

A. Providing Affordable Housing

First, the issue of affordable housing is critical for the persons we serve. Accordingly, both Governor Cuomo and the Legislature have made access to housing a top priority, as evidenced by the State's unprecedented \$20 billion investment in affordable housing, which will provide 100,000 units of affordable housing and 6,000 units of supportive housing. The \$20 billion plan includes \$10.4 billion to combat homelessness in New York. Along with our partners at Homes and Community Renewal and the Office of Mental Health, the past September we were pleased to announce the first awards, expected to support the development of 1,200 units. We're well underway in implementing the State's housing plan.

B. Serving Persons Experiencing Homelessness

Second, OTDA is committed to ensuring that persons temporarily relying on emergency shelter have access to a safe and clean living environment. Just this past year, OTDA led an effort to inspect all 916 state-funded homeless shelters. The results were staggering, as was OTDA's response: Nearly 97% of surveyed shelters presented health or safety violations that jeopardized the quality of life of residents. OTDA's response is one of aggressive vigilance. For every violation found, a corrective action plan has been implemented. We continue to work diligently with New York City and the counties to keep the quality of life in shelters higher and we have begun a multi-year initiative to get all shelters in New York State certified. At Governor Cuomo's direction, OTDA implemented new regulations to enhance the State's ability to oversee the conditions of homeless shelters and more closely monitor shelter security measures.

This year the executive budget will also improve safety and security at shelters by requiring background checks of shelter workers who have regular and substantial contact with children and by requiring shelter employees to report any child abuse or maltreatment they may see.

III. Aid for Basic Necessities

Third, the Governor will help low income New Yorkers attain basic necessities through government programs. For example, the Home Energy Assistance Program- known as HEAP helps qualified households – many of which are headed by seniors - to afford the costs for heating their homes and to reduce energy needs through energy efficiency investments. This year, the Executive Budget proposes an additional \$14.4 million in HEAP funding to support weatherization services for low-income households. The goal is to make homes more energy efficient, and reduce energy costs, so lower income households are better able to achieve financial stability.

Likewise, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—known as SNAP—increases the food purchasing power of eligible low-income households in order to improve their nutrition and alleviate hunger. Despite the program's success, there are still thousands of families who are unable to access the full amount of assistance for which they may be eligible. This year, the Governor proposes a new SNAP Outreach Partnership Initiative to engage and enroll historically difficult to reach populations. The Initiative will engage foundations and community-based organizations to develop and implement innovative ways to connect households with SNAP benefits. Increased awareness and access to nutritious food will result in a healthier New York, and improve food sales for New York farmers.

IV. Summer Jobs for Youth

Fourth, the Governor recognizes that the summer provides low income youth with the time to have an enriching experience, but such youth often cannot find a job. To address this problem, the Governor proposes an additional \$5 million for a total of \$36 million in funding to create summer jobs for approximately 19,000 youth from low-income families.

V. Supports for Immigrants and Refugees

Fifth, the Governor has been steadfast in his support for immigrants and refugees and believes New York should remain a safe haven for all; no matter race, religion, country of origin, or economic status. OTDA's provides support to local resettlement agencies. New York will continue to welcome new arrivals with open arms.

The State of New York and OTDA is stronger than in decades. Unemployment is down from 8.4% six years ago to 4.9% today. New York has 7.9 million private sector jobs, the most in the history in the State. We have also made remarkable social progress and this budget proposal will build on that success. Together we can work towards that end goal of building a better New York for all. I welcome any questions you may have at this time.