



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Frank Padavan

Senate Passes Legislation to Protect Senior Services

FRANK PADAVAN June 19, 2008

New York State Senator Frank Padavan (Queens) announced today that the state Senate has passed legislation that would require public input from all affected stakeholders and seniors on any proposed changes to services, such as meals-on-wheels, in a county aging plan.

The legislation (S.8357) would require the state Office for the Aging (SOFA) to solicit input from providers, consumers and especially seniors when considering the approval or disapproval of any changes or amendments to county aging plans or services.

“Ensuring our seniors have the very best and easily accessible services on the county level is vital,” Padavan said. “By enacting this legislation every county throughout New York must submit any changes from their annual plans. This legislation listens to the concerns of thousands of seniors in New York City and provides more transparency in how county senior services are maintained and delivered.”

Currently all counties are required to submit annual aging plans in order to maintain their qualifications as an agency for the aging and to spend federal and state funds for senior programs and services. All plans submitted to the state Office for the Aging must include detailed information and analysis and show how the respective county is improving services.

Under the legislation passed in the Senate today any change or amendment to the plans submitted to the Director of the State Office for the Aging must include:

- A detailed description and analysis showing how many seniors would be impacted by the change;
- Annual and long-term demographic projections on how many seniors would be served by the change;
- Financial sustainability of the amendment;
- Information related to potential diminishment of services as a result of the amendments or changes; and
- Cost comparisons between current and changed programs.

“This legislation sets forth a very detailed and comprehensive oversight mechanism when it comes to county related services for senior not only in New York City but throughout the state,” Padavan said. “Through increased public input, this legislation empowers and strengthens the voice of seniors and will help protect and update senior services throughout the five boroughs and our state.”

Once the amendment is submitted, the director of SOFA, must take any comments and input from all stakeholders, providers, and seniors into account during the review process. The Director of SOFA must approve or disapprove the change or amendment. Finally, the legislation requires that the county agency comply with the provisions of the approved plans and with the results of state hearings or review, unless an amended plan is approved by SOFA.

Passage of the bill comes following inaction by the New York City Council to protect senior services in the City in response to the concerns of many seniors dependent on the meal-on-wheels program that they would receive frozen, instead of hot meals.

Padavan said, "It was due to the extreme ineptitude of the city Council, coupled with their lack of action that forced the State Legislature to step in and act to protect our seniors. The fact that the City Council could not deal with their own local problem when it came to changes in service delivery for the elderly is unconscionable. We will be there for our seniors. However, the City council members should accept responsibility for their lack of action which precipitated a crisis for New York City's seniors."