

**New York State Assembly
New York State Senate
FY 2026
Budget Hearing on Human Services**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. LiveOn NY is proud to represent a network of more than 120 community-based organizations that serve over 300,000 older New Yorkers each year. Our members provide essential services that allow older adults to remain in their communities with dignity and independence. These services include senior centers, home-delivered and congregate meals, case management, affordable housing with services, elder abuse prevention, transportation, caregiver support, and programs such as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and NY Connects. LiveOn NY also leads advocacy efforts to ensure that New York remains a national leader in aging policy, dedicated to building a state where every older adult has the opportunity to age with dignity and support.

All New Yorkers deserve to live well as they age. We are living longer than ever before; however, our systems and policies have not kept pace to maintain quality of life. While countless older adults across New York are providing invaluable services to their community, such as through volunteerism, caregiving and civic participation, New York is failing to meet the needs of its aging population.

Current aging policy is fragmented and siloed. A chaotic and confusing care system struggles to meet demand. These failures have catastrophic consequences for the 1 in 5 people in New York who are over the age of 65 and their families. Older New Yorkers lose their independence; communities lose the economic benefit of older adults' spending; caregivers suffer financially, physically and emotionally. As a result, hundreds of thousands of older New Yorkers are at risk of financial ruin, social isolation and poor health outcomes. With the over-65 population projected to grow by 25% by 2040, now is the time to address the core issues, such as:

- **Our entire system is set up to prioritize the most expensive and least effective services.** Most state resources are allocated towards institutional and medical care instead of social and community-based care, costing taxpayers more than ten times more per individual receiving care.
- **Funding has not kept pace with need.** Service providers have been doing more with less and have still not recovered from major budget cuts in 2010 plus the ravages of the pandemic, all while demand continues to skyrocket. These shortfalls have led to waitlists with thousands awaiting services, and countless more not bothering to try.
- **Aging services are desperately underfunded.** The State Office for the Aging receives a meager \$178 million—less than 0.08% of the budget for the entire State. The State's budget is higher than it has ever been at a whopping \$237 billion, including \$108 billion for Medicaid.
- **Current and future demand cannot be met unless we build capacity.** We simply do not have the number of service providers and care specialists that are needed, nor a simplified process to access

services. Without investment and engagement from government, we won't be able to right size the services we need, now or in the future as our population ages.

As New York prepares to finalize its Master Plan for Aging (MPA), we must use this opportunity to embrace a new, comprehensive approach to aging that will:

- a. enhance the MPA process' relevancy and accountability and
- b. ensure that New York is building a strong infrastructure and policies that are long-lasting.

By strengthening and investing in social-model care and community-based resources, we can help older adults avoid unnecessary long-term care placements, saving millions every year in Medicaid costs and establishing the state as a safe haven for our aging population.

We envision an Empire State that is fully committed to ensure that we can thrive in old age. We are calling on New York leaders to:

1. Take an all-government approach, with an Executive Chamber role specifically responsible for a coordinated response across every agency, with clear accountability for implementing a cohesive aging vision through both public and private entities.
2. A significant investment that supports today's seniors and build sufficient capacity for the future, aligned to the New York State Master Plan for Aging recommendation, to establish a dedicated and consistent budget for aging that reflects the need and value of older adults.
3. Public transparency to guarantee efficacy, with clear metrics of success that will mark real progress of the MPA.

We now have the opportunity to lead the nation with a complete rethinking of how our state approaches aging. We can set a standard that older New Yorkers are vital to the fabric of our society, and that everyone, not just the privileged few, deserves to age in the communities that they have built.

The cost of inaction is clear: without investment, more older adults will be left without the support they need to remain healthy and independent, leading to increased strain on more expensive institutional care. New York must act now to meet the needs of its growing aging population.

The executive budget includes \$45 million to address growing wait lists. While this investment is a monumental step forward, we testify today to emphasize that additional action is urgently needed to provide the comprehensive, across-the-board support required to meet the growing needs of the aging population. Specifically, we request the following investments:

\$44 Million for Core Services Inflation and COLA: The aging service network needs across-the-board budgetary support. Rising costs for food, gas, and other essentials continue to erode providers' ability to sustain services. This funding will stabilize service delivery at local offices for the aging and ensure older adults do not experience interruptions in care.



Making New York a better place to age

\$2 Million to Launch a Resident Assistant Program in Affordable Senior Housing: This program would provide non-medical support to older adults living in affordable housing, saving the state \$4.5 million annually while enabling residents to age safely at home.

\$875,000 to Expand Elder Abuse and Scam Prevention Programming: Older adults remain disproportionately targeted by scams and abuse. This investment will strengthen community-based programs to support victims and prevent exploitation.

\$15 Million to Reform and Expand Guardianship Services: Nonprofit guardianship programs are essential to ensuring that vulnerable older adults receive person-centered surrogate decision-making support. These services must be accessible to all who need them, regardless of financial status.

\$3 Million for Medicare Counseling, Legal Services, and Patients' Rights Advocacy: These programs save older New Yorkers thousands of dollars in health care costs and provide vital legal support for housing, medical debt, and other critical needs.

\$12.5 Million for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program: Professionalizing and expanding this program would ensure regular visits to long-term care facilities, improving the quality of care for residents statewide.

LiveOn NY urges the Legislature and the Governor to make these essential investments in the FY 2026 budget. The time to act is now—our aging population cannot wait. We look forward to working together to build a stronger, more age-inclusive New York.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
LiveOn NY

About LiveOn NY:

LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, NORCs and NY Connects. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program that targets seniors in communities where benefits are most underutilized. This program helps to educate thousands of older adults, including those who are homebound, about food assistance options, as well as to screen and enroll those who are eligible for SNAP and SCRIE/DRIE.