

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



**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
Conducted By the
Senate Finance Committee
Assembly Ways & Means Committee
Wednesday, February 12, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Krueger and Pretlow, Chairpersons Cleare and Seawright, and all the distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly standing committees. I am Greg Olsen, Director of the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), and I'm honored to testify today. Governor Hochul's Executive Budget prioritizes affordability for all New Yorkers and ensuring public safety. The proposed Executive Budget does exactly that, building upon investments in last year's budget. As always, the proposed Executive Budget includes many proposals that support older adults and their families across agencies, and I will highlight some of those in my testimony.

I am pleased to testify on provisions of Governor Hochul's proposed budget that directly affect NYSOFA programs and services, along with additional budget proposals that will positively impact older New Yorkers and their families and move towards the broader goal of creating a more affordable and livable New York.

The Governor's State of the State message and subsequent Executive Budget proposal builds upon accomplishments passed in last year's Budget and sets New York on a path for a better future regardless of age.

Through much-needed investments, the Governor's FY 2026 Executive Budget expands and strengthens NYSOFA's and the network of aging services foundation that will help individuals access needed services, age in their communities of choice and lead healthy lives by:

- Making the largest, most historic investment in NYSOFA in state history by providing \$45 million to address documented unmet needs statewide. This investment brings the total invested to \$200 million since 2019.

- Increasing by \$4.7 million funding via COLA for vital services such as in-home care, nutrition, transportation, case management, and caregiver supports.
- Continued support for the Master Plan for Aging;
- Continuing the \$2.9 million to expand efforts to combat isolation, bridge the digital divide, improve overall health and wellness, reducing depression, addressing elder abuse, and strengthening NYSOFA's stipend program for volunteer recruitment and retention;
- \$6.19 million for the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP), maintaining base funding levels. LTCOP serves as an advocate for residents and their families in nursing homes and other facilities.
- Middle class tax cuts for joint filers up to \$323,000 per year, putting more money back into the pockets of older adults, particularly those on fixed incomes.
- Inflation rebates – to help address the cost of living for older adults and families by providing a payment of \$300 to single taxpayers who make up to \$150,000 per year, and a payment of \$500 for joint tax filers making up to \$300,000 per year.
- Expansion of the Child Tax Credit and free school meals– to put additional money in the pockets of hundreds of thousands of grandparents who are the primary caregivers of their grandkids.
- Expanded victim support services – to increase compensation for scam victims.
- Increasing access to government services, including benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which helps older adults apply for and receive healthy food assistance, recognizing that food is medicine.
- Innovative approaches to homebuilding such as factory-built and modular homes that are less expensive and provide

older adults an opportunity to downsize, if they choose to, and open more housing stock for larger families.

- Banning algorithmic rent price fixing – to lower the cost of rent for older adults and families.
- Enhance subway safety and consumer protections so older adults can travel on subways without fear and making it easier for consumers to cancel their subscriptions and combating financial exploitation of older adults.
- Expanding support for homeowners and businesses due to severe weather events – which will help older homeowners with urgent repairs and older businessowners to recover from weather-related damages.

This budget is about so much more than any one program or service. It must be examined holistically. Older adults, like all New Yorkers, touch many different systems in their day-to-day lives, which is why the Governor's systemic investments are so important.

NYSOFA will continue to engage anyone, anywhere who can help improve the lives of older New Yorkers. I am especially proud of our work to significantly increase access for hard-to-serve individuals and communities. NYSOFA has worked tirelessly with our county partners to reach diverse communities, and these efforts are paying off. According to our assessment data, all of our core services saw an increase in serving hard to serve older adults. We will continue our work to ensure that all New Yorkers regardless of their circumstances, have access to our services.

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