

January 30, 2024

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Majority Leader
New York State Senate
Room 907, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl Heastie, Speaker
New York State Assembly
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12228

Re: State Office for the Aging (SOFA) Executive Budget Proposal

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

On behalf of our organizations that represent older persons we thank you for all your past leadership and support for older persons and their family caregivers.

We are very disappointed in the SOFA Budget proposal that can be described as ageist and does not address the needs of older people. **We respectfully request your leadership on addressing their needs and those of their family caregivers to restore much-needed resources.**

In the Governor's Executive Order No. 23, she stated "New York has the fourth greatest population of older adults in the U.S., with 3.2 million New Yorkers (16 percent of the population) over 65. New York's population of those over the age of 60 is projected to grow to 5.3 million by 2030 with those over eighty years of age exceeding 1.2 million." In addition, it also stated, "The older adult population is growing faster than any other age group in the state."

We believe the SOFA Executive Budget proposal does not address these aging trends and the needs of those older persons now or in the future. In addition, the State Legislature should not be waiting on the Master Plan on Aging that will be finalized in two years when clearly there is an immediate need to help family caregivers keep their aging loved ones in their homes as long as possible. Older adults are a population of people that contribute to our state in innumerable ways, and they are more than an expense to the Medicaid system as the Governor has suggested.

Our organizations respectfully request that you add the following resources and oversight as you move to introduce your one-house budget bills and then finalize the budget by April.

- Currently there are 16,000 individuals and their families waiting for non-Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Care, but the Governor's proposed budget cuts the \$9.3 million legislative add from the program that delivers those services.
Budget Request: An additional investment of \$51 million to address the waiting lists.

- Of all adult care facilities, a whopping 88% do not get a weekly visit (the stated goal of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program) from an ombudsman, yet the Governor's proposed budget cuts \$2.5 million from LTCOP.

Budget Request: An additional \$15 million to meet the LTCOP goal of one visit once a week by an ombudsman per facility.

- An unfunded aging service mandate has left Area Agencies on Aging with a \$10 million dollar deficit, curtailing their ability to provide service and keep up with demand.

Budget Request: An additional \$10 million to cover the deficit.

- The State Office for the Aging for the last five years has been required to submit an annual report to the State Legislature on how funds appropriated to address the waiting lists have been spent by county, the number of participants receiving services and the services provided. To date no report has been submitted and \$75 million has been spent over the last five years to address this unmet need.

Budget Request. The reports need to be filed by SOFA as part of the State Budget to help create a plan to better target funds.

We stand ready to work with you and your respective conferences to address the needs of older New Yorkers and their family caregivers while moving forward with a final budget that keeps older people in their homes and communities as long as possible.

Sincerely,

Beth Finkel
State Director
AARP New York

Ann Marie Cook
President & CEO
Lifespan

Allison Nickerson
Executive Director
LiveOn NY

cc: Senator Krueger
Assemblywoman Weinstein
David Friedfel
Eric Katz
Philip Fields
Jen Best