

NEW YORK STATE COALITION FOR THE AGING, INC.
AND THE
STATEWIDE CAREGIVING & RESPITE COALITION OF NEW YORK
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POSITION STATEMENT ON THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

The NYS Coalition for the Aging, Inc. (NYSCA) and the Statewide Caregiving & Respite Coalition of New York (SCRCNY) understand the fiscal challenges that New York State faces. With the state having to develop a plan to close an \$8.2 billion budget gap, difficult decisions have to be made that balance both the needs of those living in the state with the requirement to pass a balanced budget.

While some support services important to help maintain older adults in their communities of choice and support caregivers have been protected, others have been targeted for cuts and are counter to the state's efforts to rebalance and reform long term care restructuring and commitment to provide community based care.

These proposed cuts listed below occur at a time when the demand for services is increasing, the state needs to realize savings and these cost effective services can help in meeting that goal, and New York's older population will grow significantly over the next decade.

NYS must act now to prepare for this dramatic shift in the older adult population. While NYS Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) has articulated a vision for addressing the needs of older New Yorkers, this budget fails to provide the financial and programmatic resources needed to make that vision a reality. It also reduces NYSOFAs staffing levels at a time where they are doing more work than ever before.

We urge the legislature to *protect and restore necessary resources that support older adult's desire to age in the community* which prevents spend-down to Medicaid and the need for more costly services, such as those provided in institutions.

Specifically, NYSCA and SCRCNY call for the legislature to:

Aging

- Restore legislative addition (\$2 million) made last year for EISEP**
- Restore legislative addition (\$1 million) made last year for CSE**
- Restore legislative addition (\$2 million) made last year for SNAP**
- Restore funding (\$806,000) for the congregate services initiative (CSI)**

Restoration of this funding will be crucial to keep older persons living in their homes and in their communities. New York's older population is growing significantly and will continue to do so over the next decade. New York needs to realize savings through these cost effective programs that keep our older adults out of high-cost institutionalized care.

Kincare

- Restore general funds for the Office of Children & Family Services Kinship Program.**
- Restore the almost \$2 million in TANF funds to the Kinship Programs.**

In New York State, there are 279,239 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.3% of all children in the state). There are another 11,806 children living in households headed by other relatives. Although the causes leading to kinship care are similar to the causes that place children in foster care, most of the caregivers are not foster parents and therefore, do not receive the services that a "formal" foster family would receive.

In New York, according to the Office of Children & Family Services, the average cost of a child in non-specialized foster care is \$22,000 per year. The average cost of the kinship programs is approximately \$500 per child. The total cost of the state's kinship program is less than the cost for just 136 children in foster care. The informal kinship care providers and without their caregiving efforts, more children will be sent to the more expensive foster care system.

Restoring these funds will not only save the state money but very importantly it will produce better outcomes for children.

Health

❑ **Reject the proposal to eliminate the trend factor and reject the increase on the gross receipt tax.**

The network of aging service providers sub-contracts with Long Term Home Health Care Program (LTHHCP) providers to provide such services as home delivered meals, social adult day care and transportation to elderly and disabled individuals who are nursing home eligible, but are able to be maintained at home with community based care and case management. This is a totally Medicaid funded program that has a proven record of reducing the cost of care for nursing home eligible individuals and keeping them at home in their most preferred setting.

❑ **Reject the proposal to eliminate wrap around coverage under EPIC and Medicaid to cover medications not covered by Medicare.**

Proposed changes to the EPIC program would damage one of the most comprehensive and successful aging program in New York State. EPIC "wrap-around" would no longer cover the costs of drugs not covered by Medicare Part D (however, EPIC will continue to cover the Part D doughnut hole). The result could be worsening of senior's health and greater public expense for individuals unable to access affordable prescription drugs.

In addition to our concerns noted above, NYSCA and SCRCNY **strongly supports:**

Support the proposed increase in the Office of Children & Family Services budget to fully fund the Bridges to Health (B2H) Medicaid Waiver from 1565 to 3305 slots which will increase the availability of respite services to all families in need.

Rx Market Reform We applaud Governor Paterson for proposing to prohibit pharmaceutical companies and their representatives would be restricted from providing inappropriate gifts or misleading/inaccurate information to doctors to promote utilization of their drugs. Doctors are currently pushed into prescribing high-cost, brand name drugs when equally effective, less expensive versions may be available.

Long Term Care The Governor's demonstration program that encourages counties to transform their nursing home beds into home and community based services should be applauded. This has been a long held position that the state should invest and create a balance between funding for institutional care and home and community based services that are preferred by the majority of older people.

*NYSCA & SCRCNY look forward to the Governor and the State Legislature
passing a budget that is reflective of our current fiscal situation
but does not cut vital services to those New Yorkers most in need.*