



**New York State Association of  
Area Agencies on Aging**

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**January 14, 2009  
2009-10 Joint Budget Hearing  
Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Ways & Means Committee  
Human Services Sub-Committee**

**Testimony of  
Joseph W. Cybulski, President  
New York State Association of Area Agencies on Aging**

Good afternoon. My name is Joseph W. Cybulski and I am President of the New York State Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and also serve as Commissioner of the Rensselaer County Unified Family Services Department of Aging. I am joined by Laura Cameron, who is Executive Director of the Association.

Our Association extends our appreciation to the Chair of the Assembly Aging Committee, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, and NYSOFA Director Michael Burgess for their leadership and support of programs and services to assist older New Yorkers. Our Association congratulates Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr. on his appointment as Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aging. We look forward to working with you, your staff and your colleagues in the Senate.

Our Association represents the 59 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), also known as Offices for the Aging, throughout New York State. Area Agencies on Aging design, fund, and coordinate

programs that maintain seniors in their homes, postponing the need for more medically intensive and costly health care services. Case managers conduct comprehensive care assessments and “package” an array of available low-cost services to support existing informal care giving and enable impaired seniors to live at home in the community. The local planning process ensures that limited government dollars are utilized effectively and efficiently to deliver the appropriate level of services to seniors, “no more, no less” than is necessary. The safety net that AAAs have been able to provide throughout the years is being challenged by the needs of a growing aging population that increasingly requires more intensive services.

I am pleased to present the Association’s views concerning the 2009-10 Executive Budget.

Governor Paterson’s proposed budget recognizes the valuable role of non-medical community based senior services and caregiver supports play in the effort to rebalance and reshape New York’s long-term care system. While the Executive Budget preserves funding for critical core programs, it does propose some reductions in funding for the three core programs coordinated by Area Agencies on Aging. In light of the fiscal climate, we are thankful that the reductions were kept to a minimum. However, the overall impact of cuts made over the last year is a reduction in services for seniors and longer waiting lists at the local level. The Executive Budget funding reductions are in addition to cuts already made in the August 2008 Special Session.

The **Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP)** provides case management services and in-home supports for the frailest elderly who represent the fastest growing cohort. The Executive Budget proposes \$46,035,000 for EISEP, a reduction of \$451,742 as compared to the August 2008 funding level, and a reduction of \$2,938,000 as compared to the enacted 2008-09 State Budget.

Established in 1979, the **Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) Program** provides non-medical community-based services to frail, low-income seniors to allow them to maintain their independence at home. The program's flexibility makes it an effective vehicle to adapt to meet the needs of the growing senior population. The Executive Budget proposes \$15,312,000, a reduction of \$173,498 as compared to August 2008 and a reduction of \$977,000 as compared to the enacted 2008-09 budget.

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** was created in 1984 and provides nutritious meals and related services to frail seniors at high nutritional risk, enabling them to remain in their own homes. The Executive Budget proposes \$21,380,000 for SNAP, a reduction of \$212,210 as compared to August 2008 and a reduction of \$1,365,000 compared to the enacted 2008-09 State Budget.

The Executive Budget proposes a one-year discontinuation of the **COLA for EISEP, CSE and SNAP**. While we understand the fiscal constraints in the state budget, we want to emphasize the importance of the COLA in recruiting and retaining workers that provide aging services in the community. Elimination of the COLA translates into reduced services and will result in longer waiting lists for services. We urge the Governor and Legislature to reinstitute the COLA in the budget for fiscal year 2009-10.

**Transportation** remains a problem for suburban and rural counties. The Executive Budget reduces the Transportation Operating Expenses by \$940,000 by eliminating the funds added by the Legislature in 2008-09. We ask the Legislature to consider restoring transportation funds. The availability of transportation makes the difference in whether or not a senior receives a meal or can attend the doctor's office.

The Association appreciates the Governor's additional \$2 million in state funds for Area Agencies on Aging to assist seniors enrolled in **EPIC in obtaining assistance with Medicare Part D**. This will help the existing HIICAP (Health Insurance Information, Counseling & Assistance Program) continue to assist consumers in assessing and selecting health care plans, and will also maximize Medicare Part D coverage.

**NY Connects - Choices for Long Term Care** provides information and assistance for consumers of all ages seeking long term care services, enabling them to remain in community-based settings and avoid over utilization of institutional care. The Executive Budget proposes a reduction in funding for NY Connects, which will be absorbed at the state level so that the local county grants will remain intact. We commend Director Michael Burgess at the NY State Office for the Aging for maintaining his commitment to local NY Connects programs.

Our Association strongly supports **evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs**. The New York State Office for the Aging is in the third year of a three-year grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging. This grant has identified programs that are proven to help older adults to remain healthy longer and remain in their own homes and communities.

**In closing**, investing state funds to maintain and expand AAA services is a cost-effective alternative to more medically intensive and costly health care services. A few dollars spent now can significantly delay, and in some cases prevent, admissions to nursing homes and subsequent Medicaid eligibility. Seniors and their families want to use their resources wisely and keep their loved ones at home for as long as possible. **These services are critical to older New Yorkers in order to remain safely and with dignity in their own homes.**