



**New York City Council  
Committee on Aging, Chair, Council Member Chin  
March 23, 2018  
Preliminary Budget and Oversight Hearing**

LiveOn NY thanks Chair Chin and the Aging Committee for the opportunity to testify on the ways the city can make New York a better place to age. LiveOn NY also thanks Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, DFTA Commissioner Donna Corrado and the entire City Council for their consideration of needs of older adults in the FY19 budget. Council Member Chin, we especially want to acknowledge your leadership, and Commissioner Corrado, as we worked together to make FY18 the Year of the Senior, with an historic \$22.8 million addition in new baselined funding to DFTA's budget.

With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations that serve over 300,000 older New Yorkers annually, LiveOn NY's members provide core services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities, including senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, transportation, NORCs and case management.

Aging creates momentum. Older New Yorkers continue to strengthen our city and contribute using the momentum they've built over a lifetime. Specifically, older New Yorkers power up local economies, engage in civic activism, contribute countless hours of volunteerism, and act as caregivers to both peers and younger generations. In effect, the *inability* for government to enable seniors to age in their communities would not only have a negative impact on each individual's lives, but would tear at the fabric that makes New York's neighborhoods so vibrant and cohesive. This momentum is evident by the seniors who are here today at this, and when we hold our Annual Senior Advocacy Day when over 350 seniors come to City Hall to meet with their Council Members.

Aging also creates challenges. A lack of fair funding for aging services puts the entire system at risk. Even with the historic gains last year, the most in decades, we know that senior services still experience waiting lists, staff turnover, and lack of a safety net for seniors. While LiveOn NY recognizes and greatly appreciates the recent investments in senior centers and the human services sector increases related to indirect rates and COLAs, we know that this is only a starting point for investments in a dynamic system that needs a continued support to meet the needs of older New Yorkers.

We are all aging. When LiveOn NY talks about the future of aging services, we include every person in every Council District. These services offer opportunities for all of us, whether we are seniors, caregivers, or our future selves. When the city invests in community based organizations that serve older adults, it offers opportunities for a 75-year-old in Manhattan to take a weekly sculpture class; one of the over 30,000 seniors who visit senior centers daily. You are investing in an 88-year-old homebound senior in Queens with a case manager working to ensure they have benefits and supports they need. And the 42-year-old in Staten Island who is caring for an aging parent, and who will someday have access to the aging services of tomorrow. It even supports the 12-year-old in Brooklyn being raised by a grandparent, and the 90-year-old in the Bronx who receives a home delivered meal by a trusted agency. These services give us all the opportunities whether it be today or tomorrow, to live like we've always lived- as New Yorkers.



With that in mind, we ask you to envision the system you see for today and for the future. To make this vision a reality New York City needs sound investments and fair funding to ensure it can be culturally competent, innovative, flexible and sustainable to serve New York today and for years to come.

LiveOn NY's priorities are attached to our testimony, and we want to briefly highlight them here.

### *Administrative Baselined Funding*

#### **Senior Centers**

##### **Expedite "Model Senior Center Budget" Funding by FY20**

LiveOn NY thanks DFTA, OMB and the Administration for their efforts through the "model budget" process. Through this process currently rolling out, the city allocated \$10 million in FY18 for senior center direct staffing and programming, and has promised an additional \$10 million by 2021. We recognize these important investments as a positive first step. We must continue to work together to ensure that senior centers receive full funding for the complete contracts for costs that were not allocated in the "model budget" process for things such as meals, rent, OTPS and other associated costs.

LiveOn NY requests that City Council prioritize expediting the funding promised to senior centers in its March Response to the Mayor's Financial plan. Expediting the \$10 million in funding by FY20 as opposed to the proposed 3-year rollout will have a hugely positive impact on the operations of these programs. As the "model budget" funding applies only to personnel and programs, we will continue to monitor this funding and advocate for other funding as needed to ensure senior center providers are adequately reimbursed for the full cost of providing services. Allocating these funds is extremely important with the projected next RFP for senior centers to be released in calendar year 2020. In addition, we encourage the city to continue to build the infrastructure and staff within DFTA so that the city is able to expeditiously and efficiently work with providers with the shared goal of high quality service delivery.

#### **NYCHA Senior Center Improvements and Supports**

LiveOn NY advocates for \$5 million in new baselined funding to ensure the nearly 100 DFTA controlled NYCHA Senior Centers have proper facilities & supports, that are in dire need of support and stability to serve older adults. These programs have unique needs for facility improvements given the long-standing federal disinvestment in Public Housing that has now created a capital backlog which in turn negatively impacts the stability of these life-sustaining programs.

#### **Add \$12.1 Million for Congregate and Home Delivered Meals**

LiveOn NY requests that \$12.1 million in new funding be baselined to increase the reimbursement rate for congregate and home-delivered meals. This funding is particularly important to increase the reimbursement rate for culturally-competent meals, such as kosher or halal, both of which currently result in a deficit to nonprofits upon each meal provided, despite cultural competency being mandated by DFTA.

### **EISEP Case Management and Homecare**

There are over 1,100 seniors on case management waitlists citywide and over 200 on waitlists for homecare. LiveOn NY greatly appreciates the investments in FY18 which are beginning to address waitlists, but the need continues to grow. We must continually build this system to serve today's need and the needs of the future. Additional funding is needed to ensure that caseloads don't go higher than 65. Funding is also needed to serve frail, homebound seniors on waiting lists so that a social worker is available to visit them at home, assess their needs and provide ongoing services. MSW compensation, as well as multilingual staff needs to be funded to ensure there is a professionally trained social worker who can work with immigrant and diverse populations and complex situations. Funding growing need and agency infrastructure are cornerstones to strengthening the case management system citywide. EISEP Homecare also offers vital supports for seniors, including help with bathing and dressing and light housekeeping that allow seniors to remain at home with the care they need to remain independent. EISEP is also a key program that services seniors that are not Medicaid eligible but still need these services, and it is vital to sustain this program.

We recommend \$2 million for Case Management and \$1 million for Homecare.

### **Additional Continued Investments in Vital Senior Services**

LiveOn NY recommends the following continued investments that allow seniors to age in their communities:

- \$1 million increased Transportation services for aging services organizations. Vans bring seniors to programs, take them food shopping and other chores, to medical appointments, on cultural/recreational trips and other purposes. Transportation is the cornerstone of remaining independent.
- \$500,000 to increase outreach and awareness for Elder Abuse Prevention services. DFTA's Elder Abuse Services are a critical resource to address this crisis, in which only one out of every 24 cases is reported.
- \$500,000 for Caregiver Supports to continue outreach & expand services, including support groups and respite. Access to affordable elder care and support for caregivers are the workforce issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Caregivers statewide provide \$32 billion of free care to loved ones. Workplace flexibility and caregiver supports go hand in hand.

### **Council Restorations and Investments in Senior Services Through Schedule C**

City Council has long been a staunch supporter of city and district wide senior services programs through allocations in Schedule C. We thank you for your investments and advocate for full restoration for all Senior Service Programs funded in Schedule C. These include NORCs, Support our Seniors, SuCasa, Senior Centers for Immigrant Populations, Health Aging Initiative, Social Adult Day, and others.

To reach the potential of New York's older adults and adequately serve this diverse cohort, city government must continue to invest in the services provided by the Department for the Aging. Benefiting over 55,000 seniors each day, including thousands of immigrants, through safe and culturally competent programming both in-home and in-community, DFTA is worth both our support and our steadfast advocacy.

### **Continued Investments in Human Services Sector**

Finally, LiveOn NY strongly supports the agency-wide investments in FY19 in the human services sector. Last year saw an important investment in human services provider organizations that hold City contracts. With your help, we secured \$300m of our \$500m ask to help nonprofit provider organizations cover the cost of delivering essential services to New Yorkers.

There are two areas of human service nonprofit operations that need special attention in FY19 - costs associated with indirect rates and fringe and escalating occupancy and insurance costs. We are suggesting funding parameters that set a floor of 15% for indirect in all human services contracts and are requesting a 10% increase in the portions of human services contracts covering occupancy and casualty and liability insurance to cover escalating costs in these areas. Additionally, the City uses an outdated formula for calculating employee fringe benefits. We are also asking for consideration of a 37% fringe rate in all human service contracts to reflect a generally accepted industry standard and that, coincidentally mirrors the fringe rate used by the City for its own employees.

As a member of the Human Services Advancement Strategy Group (HSASG), LiveOn NY, respectfully requests that the New York City Council include in its March Response a \$200m ask for FY19 to address these critical funding shortfalls.

HSASG, a group of nine membership organizations representing 2000 human service provider organizations across the City, works in collaboration to secure the programmatic, financial and operational resources needed to fully cover costs and meet the contractual obligations of provider organizations holding City HHS contracts.

LiveOn NY looks forward to working with City Council, the Department for the Aging, all city agencies and the Administration to make New York a better place to age through a strong network of community based services.

*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, and NORCs. 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 administers a citywide outreach program that supports seniors in communities where benefits are most underutilized. This program educates thousands of older adults, including those who are homebound, about food assistance options, as well as screens and enrolls those who are eligible for SNAP and SCRIE/DRIE.*

*LiveOn NY is also proud to administer the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program for the entire state, which works to prevent Medicare fraud and its associated healthcare expenses. SMP is modeled around recruiting and actively engaging senior volunteers to promote peer counseling, education and assistance on how to protect, detect, and report Medicare fraud. SMPs empower beneficiaries to reduce healthcare costs caused by errors, abuse, and fraud.*