

## Albany Budget Cuts Imperil Senior Centers, City Warns

By [DAVID W. CHEN](#)

The Bloomberg administration may need to close 105 senior centers — 40 percent of the entire system — if Albany makes good on a budget cut of approximately \$25 million, city officials said on Thursday.

The proposed closing would affect 8,000 of the 28,000 people who visit the centers for meals, friendship and activities. And every borough would be affected, based on population, ranging from 31 in Brooklyn to 4 on Staten Island, according to a list released by the city's [Department for the Aging](#).

There are currently 256 centers for the elderly in the city.

The department's commissioner, [Lilliam Barrios-Paoli](#), briefed City Council members and advocates in meetings on Thursday. She is scheduled to travel to Albany next week, and vowed to push state legislators to restore the financing.

But already, people who were briefed on the administration's contingency plans said that they were as worried as they have ever been, given Albany's bleak budget situation, as well as a new Republican majority in the Senate that may be less receptive.

"Closing these centers means ending a vital link between vulnerable older adults and the communities they helped to build," said Nancy Wackstein, executive director of [United Neighborhood Houses](#), which represents the city's community centers. "Without neighborhood senior centers, more older adults will end up at risk and isolated in their own homes or in institutions."

But if the battle over senior centers has a ring of the familiar, there is good reason: It happened last year.

For many years, the city routinely received \$25 million as part of the state's share of what is called Title XX federal financing, and directed that money toward senior centers.

But last year, Gov. [David A. Paterson](#) sought to alter the formula and direct that money toward state programs to combat domestic violence and elder

abuse. As a result, city officials warned that up to 75 centers for the elderly would close.

But this year, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo has proposed directing the Title XX money to child welfare agencies, rather than to senior centers and other initiatives, said Jeffrey Gordon, a spokesman for the state's [Division of the Budget](#).

"Every level of government is facing difficult choices, and we're looking to prioritize limited funding to priority areas," Mr. Gordon said.

Last year, the City Council, which usually provides up to 40 percent of the centers' budgets, helped keep 17 centers open.

But not this year.

"There's a limit to what we can do," said City Councilwoman [Jessica S. Lappin](#), chairwoman of the Council's Committee on Aging. "Last year, you could at least make the argument that there were places that had only four people coming every day, or you were finding some way to be more efficient. There's no way to make that kind of an argument this time. There will be no place for these people to go."

[A List of New York City Senior Center That May Be Closed](#)