

A Letter to
GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO
from Organizations Serving Older New Yorkers

January 27, 2011

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As representatives of consumer and provider organizations, we urge you to maintain the important role of the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) in your administration. This office has played a major role in coordinating services to older persons that keeps them independent and living in the community and out of taxpayer-funded institutional care. NYSOFA also serves as the vital link to state government for older citizens, community-based organizations and county offices for the aging.

We acknowledge your strong track record on protecting the interests and well being of older New Yorkers as Attorney General and fully understand the need to bring fiscal order to our state. In addition, we support your efforts to make state government more efficient and effective, and we view NYSOFA as an agency that embodies these principles. As a relatively small agency, it influences many disciplines and has spearheaded connections between dozens of state agencies on issues affecting seniors.

NYSOFA is unique in terms of its advocacy role on behalf of senior citizens, which is a key responsibility delineated in the Older Americans Act. NYSOFA also receives approximately a third of its funding from the federal government. In addition, it serves as an internal advocate in state government by collaborating with and commenting on policies of all agencies regarding issues affecting older citizens (Executive Order 2 issued on January 1, 2011, continuing Executive Order No. 12, issued May 3, 1983).

We urge you to strengthen the role of NYSOFA in your administration and to help develop policies that continue to keep older persons living independently which undoubtedly will slow the growth of New York State's Medicaid program. As the 60+ population increases in the coming years, older New Yorkers will need a strong, vibrant state agency to help them remain in their homes and communities with appropriate services, supports and unbiased information on long-term care options.

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NYSOFA also runs the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, which must remain independent because of its advocacy function with nearly 1,000 volunteers serving in assisted living, adult homes and nursing homes.

As you move toward redesigning agencies and programs, again we urge you to maintain the role of NYSOFA as an agency reporting directly to you as Governor. The agency must continue its vital function of policy analysis and program operation as our state's population of persons 60 and over continues to grow beyond the current 3.6 million.

It is important that state government be efficiently operated and managed, and simultaneously be easily accessible to those it serves, particularly the most vulnerable citizens. We urge you to maintain this vital role of the New York State Office for the Aging.

Sincerely,

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cc: Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Chair, Assembly Aging Committee
Senator David J. Valesky, Chair, Senate Aging Committee