STATE OF NEW YORK

6527

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 17, 2025

Introduced by Sen. CLEARE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Aging

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing the office for an age-friendly New York

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings and intent. Because aging is a process we all experience, New Yorkers of all ages do better when we make sure everyone can age successfully. New York state was named the first Age Friendly State in the country in 2017 by AARP and remains committed to being age-friendly so that all New Yorkers can age with dignity and independence. New York's older adult population is 3.5 million strong. Older New Yorkers make our state a healthier, stronger, and more vibrant place to live, through multiple ways including paid and volunteer work, raising and mentoring younger New Yorkers, supporting their families, sharing their wisdom, and starting new businesses.

Nearly 1 in 6 New Yorkers is over the age of 65, and that population will continue to grow. Between 2015 and 2040, the number of New Yorkers aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 50 percent, while the population aged 85 and older is projected to double. Shifts in the state's aging population will present new demands and opportunities for the state, local governments, families, and older New Yorkers. All older adults must have the option to remain in their communities as they age, and that must be a meaningful choice with access to a broad range of programs, resources and supports, including safe and affordable housing, healthcare, home care, food and nutrition, human services, and transportation. An inclusive state for New Yorkers of all ages remains our goal.

Older adults' health and well-being improves when they have varied opportunities to stay socially engaged. The state must do everything it can to reduce isolation and ensure that all communities have opportunities for seniors to interact. Reliable and safe ways to access these

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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opportunities allows older adults to be thriving contributors in their communities.

As New York's older adult population grows, it will continue becoming more diverse and may be more likely to be childless, live alone, work longer, have lower incomes, or have less retirement savings, presenting new challenges for the state and local governments. These demographic shifts necessitate strategic and adaptive policy changes.

Actively engaging older adults as contributors to the social, economic, and civic fabric of our communities, encouraging physical and psychological health and well-being in older adults and their caregivers, and supporting direct care workers and family caregivers as they provide essential care for older adults makes New York better. Only when we acknowledge the talents and contributions of all New Yorkers, no matter their age, can we adapt to future demands. To be a truly age-friendly state, it is vital that the state have a member of the governor's staff whose role is coordinating age-friendly services and policies across agencies.

§ 2. The executive law is amended by adding a new article 19-M to read as follows:

ARTICLE 19-M

OFFICE FOR AN AGE-FRIENDLY NEW YORK

Section 549. Definitions.

549-a. Office for an age-friendly New York established.

549-b. Director; general responsibilities.

549-c. State agency and department written plans.

549-d. Construction with other laws.

§ 549. Definitions. For the purposes of this article, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Older New Yorkers" means New York residents over the age of fifty.

(b) "Age-friendly" means a policy developed to contribute towards the goal of ensuring that the state government provides older New Yorkers with access to supportive systems to ensure that they remain healthy and active in the communities of their choice.

(c) "Director" means the director of the office for an age-friendly New York appointed pursuant to section five hundred forty-nine-a of this article.

§ 549-a. Office for an age-friendly New York established. 1. There is hereby established within the executive department an office for an age-friendly New York.

2. The head of the office for an age-friendly New York shall be the director of the office for an age-friendly New York, who shall be appointed by the governor and who shall receive a salary to be fixed by the governor within the amounts appropriated therefor.

§ 549-b. Director; general responsibilities. 1. The director shall:

(a) work in coordination with the state office for the aging to ensure proper implementation of the Older Americans Act and other relevant laws;

(b) work with state agencies in developing and incorporating age-friendly policies into their operations and programming;

(c) work with state agencies in planning and implementing community improvements across the state to better meet the needs of older New Yorkers, including but not limited to, walkable streets, appropriate and accessible housing, transportation, and employment options, social inclusion, and access to key services and opportunities at all life stages to participate in community activities; and

(d) work with state agencies to develop legislation and potential regulatory changes to help effectuate the duties and responsibilities required in this section, and any other changes that may significantly affect the lives of older New Yorkers.

2. The director shall, to the extent practicable, review and report to the governor upon proposed legislation and regulations. The director shall submit comments, where appropriate, to the state agency which referred such proposed legislation and regulations evaluating:

(a) the impact of the proposed legislation or regulation upon older New Yorkers;

(b) the relationship and impact of such proposed legislation or regulation on existing programs affecting older New Yorkers; and

(c) any modifications that would help older New Yorkers or aid in the implementation of the new proposal.

3. All state agencies shall cooperate with the director to ensure that the director is able to fulfill the requirements under this article.

§ 549-c. State agency and department written plans. Beginning two years after the effective date of this article, and every two years thereafter, each state agency and department shall submit a written plan to the director containing a description of such agency or department's efforts to ensure that its services are age-friendly, and containing such agency or department's plans to continue and/or expand such age-friendly services.

§ 549-d. Construction with other laws. Nothing in this article shall be construed to supersede or replace the statutory duties or powers of the state office for the aging under the laws of this state.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.