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**NYS Budget Includes \$5 Million Increase for Community Services for the Elderly**

(4/1/2014) – Every day seniors and their caregivers reach out to their local offices for the aging and community agencies for information, assistance and services, and today they have a better chance of receiving those services, thanks to the New York State Legislature.

The State's Budget for 2014-15 includes an additional \$5 million for the Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) program and \$930,000 for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for several comprehensive programs that help older New Yorkers remain independent.

Baby boomers will begin reaching age 70 in two years. It is incumbent upon the state to provide services to older New Yorkers while preparing for the heightened age wave yet to come. Adding funding to the CSE program is a first major step toward eliminating waiting lists. Imagine being homebound and waiting for a home-delivered meal, a social worker to assist you, or a van to bring you to the doctor or supermarket. We commend the elected officials who support additional CSE funding so that older adults can age in place with dignity.

The Association on Aging in NY (Aging-NY), Council of Senior Centers and Services (CSCS), Lifespan, and NYS Coalition for the Aging (NYSCA) applaud the Senate and Assembly for recognizing the value of the long term supports and services, especially in light of the growing aging population. Every county but one in New York State experienced growth in their senior population between 2000 and 2010, according to the US Census.

The four groups joined together to request an additional \$26 million in this year's state budget for the CSE program in an effort to deplete waiting lists for services at local offices for the aging and community-based agencies. The additional CSE funding in this year's budget is a good start toward investing in what is needed to help the 7,000 seniors currently on waiting lists for services across the state.

The \$5 million will reduce the waiting list by about 20 percent. These additional funds will bring services to almost 1,400 older New Yorkers who have been waiting to receive services such as transportation to medical appointments, in-home personal care, nutritious meals and social model adult day services. The flexibility of CSE enables local offices for the aging and community agencies to address high-priority needs within their communities.

“We are all grateful the State recognizes the needs of older adults. This funding is needed to assist older New Yorkers who spent years of their lives making our communities a better place to live. We applaud the Legislature for their commitment and recognition of the needs of older adults,” said Ann Marie Cook, President/CEO of Lifespan of Greater Rochester, and President of the New York State Coalition for the Aging.

“The additional CSE funds will address areas of greatest need at the local level,” said Laura Cameron, Executive Director of the Association on Aging in New York. “The demand for services continues to escalate, fueled by a growing senior population. Enhancing these vital services will make it possible for more New York residents to remain in their homes and communities as they get older. That’s good for them - and it’s good for New York.”

Igal Jellinek, Executive Director, Council of Senior Centers and Services, states, "With the rapid growth in the number and diversity of older New Yorkers, CSCS is pleased that that the state acknowledges its responsibility to address growing waiting lists, 7000 elderly people statewide, for services such as case management, meals-on-wheels and other programs. The \$5 million increase for the Community Services for the Elderly program is a sound state investment and will allow many seniors to come off the waiting list. The state has taken a major step in the right direction and we applaud them for this."

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