January 5, 2022

Dear LeadingAge NY Members:

This afternoon, Governor Kathy Hochul delivered her 2022 State of the State address from the Assembly Chamber floor. Setting the tone for the legislative session, she called for collaboration among elected officials, legislative and executive branches, and state and local officials. Her address was accompanied by a lengthy policy agenda for the coming year, entitled [State of the State Book: A New Era for New York](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.governor.ny.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2022-01%2F2022StateoftheStateBook.pdf&data=04%7C01%7Csdaly%40leadingageny.org%7C309a068d0c144ed5ef0008d9d099c041%7C6d78e436c2fc42c9934dbce6aebd59bb%7C0%7C0%7C637770181060880048%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=3ot8Jdkxu5sth5pdCeLXDwJETjYYBFvf3VfaeRRYghw%3D&reserved=0). We were gratified that several of the proposals LeadingAge NY had advanced to the Executive Branch on workforce, affordable senior housing, and long-term care models were included in the Governor’s policy agenda. In fact, Governor Hochul’s agenda demonstrates a more constructive focus on the needs of older adults and long-term care policy than any State of the State address in recent memory.

A substantial portion of the address was dedicated to rebuilding the state’s health care delivery system and its workforce. Of particular note for LeadingAge NY members, the Governor will issue a State Master Plan for Aging and invest $10 billion in the health care workforce and health care infrastructure needs. In addition, her policy agenda covered economic development, education, infrastructure, clean energy, and affordable housing.

We anticipate that many of these proposals will be reflected in the Executive Budget. The Executive Budget will be released by Jan. 19th and will provide details and legislation supporting the Governor’s agenda. Below are some highlights and specific measures revealed today that will impact LeadingAge NY members:

**Workforce**

The Governor’s workforce proposals reflect and align with the recommendations developed and advanced by LeadingAge NY in consultation with our workforce work group:

**Rebuild and Grow the Healthcare Workforce by 20 Percent Over the Next Five Years:** This initiative includes a $10 billion multi-year investment in health care and support for health care worker wages. The investment will include $2 billion for wages, $2 billion for retention bonuses, $500 million in cost of living adjustments for human services workers, and $2 billion in health care capital infrastructure. It also includes initiatives to provide free tuition and stipends for students and trainees in high-demand health occupations, supports for workers such as child care and transportation, and to expand the training capacity of medical institutions.

**Expand Flexibility of Direct Care Workers:** This initiative aims to support more career flexibility for direct care workers, enabling them to be efficiently deployed in different long-term care roles. Notably, it refers to our **Medication Technician** proposal and supports a training model for universal workers.

**Expand Flexibility Allowed in Recent Executive Orders:** The Governor will propose legislation to make permanent provisions such as allowing more professionals to administer vaccines, flu, and COVID-19 testing; modernizing supervisory requirements in clinical laboratories; and waiving requirements for nurse practitioners to have a practice agreement with a physician.

**Create an Office of Healthcare Workforce Innovation:** The Governor announced the creation of this office to better coordinate statewide health and direct care workforce strategies by working with stakeholders to develop approaches implemented in other states, test new models of care, and recommend policies to increase the supply of health care and direct support personnel.

**HCBS ARPA Investments:** The agenda noted that New York State has applied to the federal government to spend $2.2 billion of American Rescue Plan Act funding on initiatives including:

* Home Care Workforce Initiative: Enables home care agencies to implement evidence-based programs that help them to recruit, retain, train, and support their direct care workers.
* Workforce Transportation Incentive: Solves transportation-related barriers related to home care worker recruitment and/or retention.

**Health Equity**

**Expand Affordable Senior Housing:** The Governor will launch a comprehensive new five-year spending plan to create and preserve affordable homes across the state, including $300 million for senior housing and a commitment to the creation or preservation of 10,000 supportive housing units to serve vulnerable and at-risk populations, including elderly seniors.

**Establish a State Master Plan for Aging:** The Governor intends to issue an Executive Order implementing a comprehensive State Master Plan for Aging that would address alternative settings for New Yorkers who want to age in place, improve the care provided in both homes and nursing facilities, and combat key issues facing seniors like social isolation and elder abuse. This master plan would coordinate all state policy and programs, creating what the Governor called a blueprint of strategies to ensure that older New Yorkers can live fulfilling lives, in good health, with the freedom and independence to age in place for as long as possible. The initiative would also address challenges related to communication, coordination, caregiving, long-term financing, and innovative care.

**Invest in Innovative Nursing Home Models:** The Governor announced that she will invest in nursing home conversions to the Green House model and other innovative nursing home approaches to provide greater access to cutting-edge care.

**Ensure Vulnerable Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Maintain Health Coverage as They Age or Become Disabled:** This initiative will expand Medicaid eligibility for New Yorkers age 65 and up, as well as those with disabilities, to enable them to maintain Medicaid eligibility after they become eligible for Medicare.

**Require Memory Care Certification:** Establishing certification criteria for “memory care.” Under this proposal, nursing homes will be required to include specific training requirements for staff and administrators, as well as resident programming requirements that seek to reduce cognitive decline, emphasize quality of care, and promote aging in place.

**Combat Social Isolation and Abuse:** The Governor’s agenda includes several initiatives aimed at preventing social isolation and protecting older adults from abuse, including:

* Expanding the current programming of the New York State Office for the Aging to more New Yorkers, helping to subsidize wireless internet cost.
* Strengthening the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
* Establishing an Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation Program in the Department of Financial Services to provide professional bill paying services to vulnerable older adults and help identify financial exploitation.

**Expand Digital Health Access:** The Governor announced a number of efforts to increase access to digital health strategies, including:

* **Telehealth Expansion:** The Governor will require private insurers to reimburse appropriate telehealth services at the same levels as traditional services.
* **Develop the Center for Medicaid Innovation:** This office will identify and cultivate innovative digital health technologies and solutions to achieve better quality, lower costs, and improved patient experiences in the Medicaid program. The Center will connect private technology companies looking to integrate with Medicaid systems – making these innovative care tools available to more New Yorkers.

**Next Steps**

The policy team will be thoroughly reviewing the budget bills once they become available, no later than Jan. 19th, and will provide another high-level review of the Executive Budget Proposal at that time. Then, approximately one week after the release of the budget bills, we will distribute a comprehensive memo on the Executive Budget Proposal, covering all service lines.

As we review the Executive Budget Proposal budget bills, we will begin working on our advocacy message in preparation for our 2022 Advocacy Days and other advocacy initiatives. Please **SAVE THE DATE for LeadingAge NY Virtual Advocacy Days, which will be held on Feb. 9th, 10th, and 11th.** More details on LeadingAge NY Advocacy Days and our virtual approach for 2022 will be shared in our Legislative Bulletin on Fri., Jan. 7th, so please be sure to keep an eye out for the return of that publication.

This is just the beginning of the State Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget cycle, but we are pleased by the proposals we are seeing from the Governor thus far. Many of the proposals outlined in the State of the State are a result of the advocacy we all have done since the close of the 2021 Legislative Session. Thank you so much for your continued advocacy on top of everything you are doing for the individuals in your care. Your voice is so appreciated and has allowed us to make the progress we have accomplished thus far. However, there is a great deal of 2022 budget advocacy work still ahead, and we will need to keep the pressure on lawmakers to ensure all of our 2022 budget priorities are included in the Final Budget due on March 31st.

As always, please contact the policy team if you have any questions. We will be sure to keep you updated on all relevant budget developments.