

MEMORANDUM

A.3212 (Santabarbara)

AN ACT to amend the vehicle and traffic law, in relation to the production of and the assessment of a surcharge for distinctive "Feeling Rural Good" license plates; and to amend the state finance law, in relation to establishing the feeling rural good health care fund

LeadingAge New York strongly supports and urges the swift passage of A.3212 (Santabarbara) to create an additional source of funding to address the pervasive health disparities that are found throughout the rural regions of New York State.

The bill will provide millions of caring and concerned New Yorkers with the ability to voluntarily take part in a state-wide effort to raise money to support initiatives that address health disparities in the state's rural regions. Specifically, the bill authorizes the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to issue "Feeling Rural Good" license plates for which DMV would collect, in addition to the regular vehicle registration fee, a surcharge for each plate that DMV would then deposit in a special fund that the New York State Department of Health could use to fund rural health care provider programs that are designed to address a range of factors that influence New York's rural health care outcomes.

Rural New Yorkers face unique challenges in terms of access to affordable health care services. Fewer options are available to those living in rural settings, and the workforce challenges across the state are felt more acutely in rural settings. Older adults needing services are particularly vulnerable in rural areas, and often will go without needed services.

In recognition of these drivers of rural health disparities, A.3212 (Santabarbara) will provide rural health care providers with critical additional funding for projects and initiatives that support licensed senior health care providers; enhance broadband access for better access to telehealth; facilitate physician recruitment, and improve the quality of care and services offered by health care providers in rural regions. The funds can also help rural regions expand school-based health programs and improve access to health research and education which is critical for rural communities and the people who live and work there.. These rural projects and initiatives will – over time – begin to drive a decline in the prevalence of rural health disparities in many areas of the state.

For all these reasons, LeadingAge NY supports A.3212 (Santabarbara) and urges that it be adopted.

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