

# New York StateWide Senior Action Council

# MEMBER UPDATE

FEB 2026



Maria Alvarez

## STATEWIDE MEMBERS DEMAND: BUDGET EQUITY FOR SENIORS — ACTION NEEDED NOW

Governor Hochul has released her FY 2026–27 budget proposal. While she points to the Master Plan for Aging as a solution for New York’s growing older population, the budget tells a different story. Funding for aging services is essentially flat—even though older adults now make up 20% of the state’s population.

Flat funding in the face of rising need is a cut. And to make matters worse, the proposal includes rate increases for hospitals, nursing homes, and other providers, while leaving consumer focused services behind.

StateWide’s programs are feeling the strain. Our Patients Rights Helpline is receiving more calls than ever, and the issues New Yorkers face are increasingly complex due to constant changes in the health care system. After 53 years of advocacy, we know one thing for certain: when our members mobilize, we win.

All the details are in this newsletter. Now we need you to do what you do best:

- Call your elected officials.
- Demand equity in the state budget.
- Insist that Patients Rights funding be fully restored & augmented.



**JOIN US IN ALBANY ON MAY  
11 FOR GRASSROOTS DAY!**

- ✓ Your voice has power.
- ✓ Your advocacy changes outcomes.
- ✓ We’ll see you in Albany.

Maria Alvarez,  
Executive Director

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Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374

## MOST FEDERAL AGENCIES CONTINUE FUNDING AT 2025 LEVELS



This has been a difficult federal budget process with the longest ever government shut down in Fall 2025. At that time, the lack of a budget resulted in significant disruptions, most notably in the withholding of food stamp benefits. Once budget negotiations resumed, food stamps were funded without further interruption through the end of the federal fiscal year, September 30, 2026. However, unresolved are fixing the first-time-ever huge costs to states to pay for SNAP administration.

Congress gave itself until the end of January to complete negotiations on the remaining budget matters which included funding for health and social services programs & the Older Americans Act. Those issues were resolved in an enacted budget for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Key issues include:

- Extension of the authority for Medicare providers to use telehealth services through 2027.
- The low-income Medicare beneficiary outreach and enrollment program has been extended through Dec 31, 2027.
- Community health centers will receive the largest increase in mandatory funding in a decade.



- The National Health Service Corps will receive a 13 percent increase in funding to incentivize study to become a health care professional.
- Regulation of pharmacy benefit managers to bring down the costs of prescriptions.
- Funding for Heating & Cooling assistance (HEAP) was increased by \$20 million.
- A \$50 million increase for the Social Security Administration to support front-line beneficiary services through field office visits, calls, and online queries.
- Funding for Administration on Community Living (ACL) programs that support your local Office for Aging services – but it should be noted that funding fails to keep up with demand or the costs of providing services.

There was a nominal increase in funding in ACL and other agencies:

- ⇒ Supportive Services and Senior Centers
- ⇒ National Family Caregiver Support Program
- ⇒ Native American Nutrition, Supportive Services and Family Caregiver services
- ⇒ Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) that is a source of funds for local Meals on Wheels programs



- ⇒ USDA: Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- ⇒ HUD Section 202 Housing for the Elderly

There was a decrease in funding for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

As we went to press, Congress had only one remaining budget to address—and it's big and complicated: the Homeland Security bill. The negotiations are focused on efforts to legislate controls on the Department of Homeland Security.

Funding in this bill provides for, among other things, TSA agents at airports and that is a driving force to keep funding flowing so there is no disruption in air travel. Congressmembers are notably concerned about the Division of Homeland Security's oversight of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) & Border Patrol services and are holding up funding the Department's budget until safeguards can be negotiated to ensure activities ensure due process and reduce the use of force.

### **INCREASE IN THE UNINSURED**

Unresolved is the issue of the expiration of the enhanced premium tax credits for purchasing health insurance through the Affordable Care Act health exchanges. The subsidies expired at the end of December, and those renewing their coverage for the new year faced unaffordable health premiums.

As a result of this unfinished business and the cuts to Medicaid adopted in the summer, there are estimates of up to 1 million New Yorkers who will become uninsured. This is a concern for all of us, as the burden of uncompensated care that our hospitals and health agencies will struggle with impacts everyone's access to quality health care.

### **GILLIBRAND FIGHTS FOR ANTI-SCAM LEGISLATION - \$16 BILLION STOLEN FROM AMERICANS IN 2024 DUE TO CRIME, SAYS SENATOR**



U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and StateWide Executive Director Maria Alvarez, at podium, with members of New York StateWide Senior Action Council advocating for Senator Gillibrand's Federal anti-scam bill.



**New York StateWide Senior  
Action Council presents:**

# SENIOR GRASSROOTS DAY

## MAY 11, 2026

### WHERE

**Convention Center  
Empire State Plaza  
in Albany, N.Y.**

Plans are being made to provide free charter buses to Albany.

### WHEN

**Monday, May 11**

Transportation is limited. Registration is required by  
**May 1, 2026**

### BRIEFING

**Empire State Plaza,  
Meeting Room 6, 11 AM**

After the briefing, attendees to meet with State Legislators from their regions.

#### **NOW MORE THAN EVER, YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED!**

This is your chance to meet with lawmakers, share your story, and push for policies that support the health, financial security, and well-being of older adults.

#### **YOUR ADVOCACY CAN DRIVE CHANGE.**

Seniors are a powerful force in shaping public policy. Together, we can ensure lawmakers prioritize the issues that matter most to us. Your participation will make a difference!

- Sign Up Today! Scan the QR code or contact us at 800-333-4374 to register.**
- Transportation Available:** Let us know if you need a ride to Albany.
- Bring Your Questions and Ideas:** This is your opportunity to have your concerns addressed by key decision-makers.

**STATE  WIDE**

**New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc**  
4 Computer Drive West, Suite 205, Albany, NY 12205 • Fax 518-436-7642  
[www.nysenior.org](http://www.nysenior.org) • 800-333-4374



**Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374**

## STATE BUDGET



StateWide recently testified before the State Legislature on the Governor's Proposed Budget and provided a virtual briefing

for our members and friends. The issues we addressed were:

**Ensure the funding for aging services is sufficient to meet the needs of an aging population and to build the capacity of service providers to meet future needs.**

- Reject flat funding for aging services.
- Understand the impact on enrollment and capacity of the EISEP program resulting from the new Medicaid Home Care eligibility restrictions, effective September 2025, and repeal the law that increased the number of Activities of Daily Living needed to qualify for in home services under Medicaid.
- Fund the Master Plan for Aging Proposal #50 to increase the funding to the local office for aging to end waiting lists.
- Create a publicly accessible dashboard to track the implementation of Master Plan for Aging recommendations.

**Expand the Elderly Pharmaceutical Assistance Program.**

- Decrease the age to apply so that all New Yorkers who have Medicare Part D and meet standard income requirements qualify.

- Provide \$0 copayments for insulin and inhalers, the same benefit guaranteed to insured New Yorkers not on Medicare.



**Support Not-for-Profits that Serve New Yorkers.**

- Ensure that state agencies process contracts with non-profits in an efficient and timely manner.
- Provide an Annual 2.7% COLA for all human services not-for-profit providers funded through the NYSOFA budget. The Governor proposed a 1.7% COLA and only for the three core programs, EISEP, WIN (nutrition) and Community Services for the Elderly.

**Protect clients in settings where aging services are provided.**

- Amend the Governor's proposal to restrict civil immigration enforcement in sensitive locations to include congregate meal sites, senior centers, heating & cooling centers and shelters.

**Support the Governor's proposal to double funding for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs & NNORCs).**

- We are disappointed that Governor has not added funding for other vital programs.

### Address affordability.

- Support the Governor's proposal to increase the income level to qualify for the Greater New York Metropolitan area SCRIE program (Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption,) as well as the companion program for persons living with disabilities, from the current \$50,000 threshold to \$75,000.
- Increase the Personal Needs Allowance (PNA), the small portion of income that nursing home residents may keep each month to pay for essential personal items that are not covered by Medicaid.
- Support the Governor's proposal to convert SNAP benefits to chip enabled EBT cards to prevent skimming theft from occurring.
- Support the Governor's proposal to increase funding for nutrition outreach services and infrastructure expansion for food banks, but note the budget's failure to provide needed funding for the NYSOFA administered congregate dining & home delivered meals programs.



### Address the home care crisis.

- Provide a livable wage to the home care workforce, including those that work for state funded EISEP services, by paying 150% of regional minimum wage through the "Fair Pay for Home Care Act".
- End the Medicaid Managed Long Term

Care (MLTC) program and re-invest savings to improve home & community-based services including providing better pay and benefits to workers, as found in the proposed Home Care Savings and Reinvestment Act.

- Reinvest Savings attributed to administrative changes in the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) to support recruitment and retention of home care workers.
- Track the services received by Medicaid enrollees that previously were enrolled in CDPAP to determine if they are able to receive the hours of care based on their individual assessment of needs while now relying on traditional home care services.

### Funding for StateWide's two state contracts, the Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) and the Patient Rights Hotline and Advocacy Project (PRH.)

#### MCCAP

StateWide counselors help Medicare enrollees navigate the health care system, make informed decisions about choice of coverage, and assist with EPIC & Medicare Savings Program (MSP) enrollments. We seek \$1 million in additional funding for the 6 providers (of which StateWide is one,) so that we can increase



capacity to reach more underserved and hard to reach seniors who are not accessing all of the benefits programs for which they rightfully qualify. The Governor has provided flat funding for this program (same as 2025.)

### PRH

StateWide counselors help callers uphold their rights as a patient in hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living, home care settings, & medical practices. Additionally, we are able to host monthly Teach Ins on important topics. We are seeking an additional funding of \$50,000 to address increased costs. The funding is traditionally \$231,500, with \$31,500 being proposed in the Governor's budget and the Legislature adding \$200,000 during negotiations.



### MEDICAL AID IN DYING

The Governor has now signed into law a bill to allow terminally ill people with six months remaining, to request from a physician a prescription that they will self-administer to end their life, if (when, where and with whom) they choose to exercise this choice. The bill, passed during the 2025 state legislative session, needed to be amended in January in order for the Governor to approve this new law. Those changes included a delay in implementation until August 2026 to allow the state to develop regulations, among several other safeguards the Governor wanted. StateWide has a long history of supporting this measure as a patient right & will have more details as the regulations are promulgated.

NY STATEWIDE SENIOR ACTION COUNCIL

**ACTION ALERT**



**ASSEMBLYMEMBER - 518-455-4100**

**SENATOR - 518-455-2800**

Now is the time to **CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS** to seek their support to ensure the Patients' Rights Helpline is not cut and to seek a nominal increase over 2025 funds. See the directions and the message for those calls below.

#### MESSAGE:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ & I live in the district.

Please stop the cut to NY StateWide Senior Action Council's Patient Rights Helpline by restoring \$200,000 to the budget and adding an additional \$50,000 to address inflationary costs and unmet need.

**Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374**

## SCAM ALERT: UNWANTED CATHETERS BILLED TO MEDICARE

Medicare beneficiaries across the country are seeing claims on their Medicare statements related to urinary catheters that were not needed or received.

“Scammers are targeting Medicare beneficiaries and billing for supplies that aren’t medically necessary which hurts the Medicare program and compromises the beneficiary’s medical identity,” said Tiffany Erhard, Director of the NY Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP).

### How the scam works:

- Scammers use unsolicited calls, emails, or online ads to collect Medicare numbers.
- Medicare is billed for catheter kits that were never requested or ordered, and claims may appear legitimate because a familiar provider’s name is listed.
- The beneficiary is unaware until reviewing their Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB).

Since many people affected by this scam never receive any catheters at all, reviewing your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB) is the only way to know your Medicare identity has been misused.

- Don’t assume a charge is legitimate just because a familiar doctor’s name appears.

- Report charges to the NYS Senior Medicare Patrol for items you didn’t receive or need.
- Never share your Medicare number with unsolicited callers.



If you see charges for catheter kits on your Medicare statements that were never received, weren’t medically necessary or were not ordered by your doctor, contact the NYS SMP for help at **800-333-4374**.

## VOLUNTEER WITH THE NYS SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL

- ✓ **EDUCATE** others about Medicare fraud
- ✓ **RECEIVE TRAINING** & ongoing support
- ✓ **MAKE AN IMPACT** in your community
- ✓ **JOIN A NETWORK** of dedicated volunteers protecting their community against Medicare Fraud and Scams!



**SMP Volunteer**  
Jorge Tate  
Brooklyn, NY

This project was supported, in part by grant number 90MPPG01701 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.

**STATE WIDE**  
New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.  
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**SMP**  
Senior Medicare Patrol  
Preventing Medicare Fraud

# SAVE THE DATE

## New York StateWide Senior Action Council's 2026 Convention



**LOCATION:**  
**Embassy Suites in Saratoga Springs**  
**OCTOBER 12-14, 2026**

### What to Expect:

- Participate in interactive forums
- Hear directly from elected officials on important issues affecting seniors
- Exhibit Hall on October 13 featuring essential products, programs, and services for seniors

### Panel Discussions include:

- Preserving Social Security, Medicare
- Medicare Benefits Update
- Medicare Fraud, Abuse, and the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)
- Hospital Admissions, Patient's Rights
- Consumer Financial Protections

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,**  
visit us at [www.nysenior.org](http://www.nysenior.org) -or- call 518-436-1006

**Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374**

## NEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

|                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Karen Barnes                | Cold Brook  |
| Elaine Bertie               | Mohega Lake |
| Bruce Gaska                 | Utica       |
| Lila Carter                 | Manhattan   |
| April Kunda                 | Syracuse    |
| Catherine McHugh            | Brooklyn    |
| Evelyn Merrero              | Brooklyn    |
| Julie Stoil Fernandez, Esq. | Kingston    |
| Marcia Waithe               | Queens      |

## NEW LIFETIME MEMBERS

|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| Rosalyn Allman   |               |
| Manning          | Brooklyn      |
| Robert Briggs    | Manhattan     |
| Linda Brown      | Brooklyn      |
| Noreen George    | Brooklyn      |
| Maureen Gomez    | Staten Island |
| Margaret Johnson | Woodstock     |
| Ide Katims       | Kingston      |
| Genevieve Smith  | Bronx         |

## NEW ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

Bay Ridge Center Neighborhood  
Ambassadors, Brooklyn

NYS Association for Rural Health, Inc.,  
Gowanda

## KRYZAK FUND CONTRIBUTORS

|                               |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Maria Alvarez                 | Long Island City |
| Charles Battaglia             | Hamburg          |
| Bruno & Marie Bruni           | Westfield        |
| Michael Burgess               | Delmar           |
| Ann Converso                  | Lawtons          |
| Margaret & Patrick<br>Corbett | Rome             |
| Eustene Corbin                | Brooklyn         |
| Helen Edelstein               | Rhinebeck        |
| MaryAnn Fastook               | Manhattan        |
| Nellie Gonzalez Arce          | Manhattan        |
| Sharon Green                  | Brooklyn         |
| Marcus Harazin                | Delmar           |
| Mario Henry                   | Flushing         |
| MaryAnn & Mark<br>Hildebrandt | Saugerties       |
| Kathryn Klyne                 | St Johnsville    |
| Elizabeth Kryzak              | Flushing         |
| Claire & Larry O'Brien        | Kingston         |
| Rick Poplaski                 | Ballston Lake    |
| Michele Rogers                | Saratoga         |
| Susan Schrader                | Ft. Covington    |
| Bernadette Sherman            | Norwood          |
| Jorge & Donna Tait            | Brooklyn         |
| Evette Weeks                  | Brooklyn         |
| Lauryn Wilson                 | Bronx            |
| Richard & Lucy Zaslow         | Forest Hills     |



IN MEMORY OF: SYLVIA WILLIAMS  
IN HONOR OF: CHARLIE BATTAGLIA  
IN HONOR OF: GAIL MYERS

HONORED BY: ROSA JACKSON  
HONORED BY: ROBERT O'CONNELL  
HONORED BY: BARBARA THOMAS

**By joining StateWide,** you can have an impact on state and federal issues of importance to older New Yorkers such as Medicare, Social Security, prescription drugs, patients' rights, long-term care, and budget issues. Your membership also provides:

- **Access to an active network of dedicated people** including local senior organizational members.
- **Representation at the State Legislature** and agencies in Albany.
- **The NY StateWide Bill Tracker** that keeps tabs on pending legislation that impacts seniors.
- Subscriptions to our newsletter **Member Update**, and our **Weekly Roundup** email with up to date information on health and consumer issues at the local, state and national levels.
- Member discounted rate for our Annual Convention featuring workshops on important senior issues and presentations from key public officials, policy experts and grassroots advocacy leaders.



**YOUR DUES ARE DUE IF THERE IS AN ASTERISK\* ON YOUR MAILING LABEL.**

**Check box:**

- Individual Membership \$ 20/yr
- Couple Membership \$ 25/yr
- Lifetime Membership \$ 150/ind.
- Lifetime Membership \$ 200/couple
- Organization Membership \$ 75/yr

**Check box:**

- New Member
- Renewal
- Gift of Membership\*

\*Gifted by \_\_\_\_\_

**Contributions**

- Rose Kryzak Legacy Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliated Organization (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

You can contact us at **518-436-1006**. Please make your check payable to: NY StateWide Senior Action Council  
Mail this form and your check to: c/o Gail Myers, 46 Commonwealth Drive, Glenmont, NY 12077

**All dues and contributions are tax deductible**

# STATE WIDE

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4 Computer Drive West, Suite 205, Albany, NY 12205 • Fax 518-436-7642  
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JOIN US IN ALBANY FOR GRASSROOTS DAY (See page 4 for more information) RSVP by May 1st.

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## **DON'T MISS AN ISSUE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR JUST \$20**



**IF YOU SEE AN ASTERISK ON YOUR NEWSLETTER ADDRESS LABEL, THIS IS YOUR FINAL ISSUE. DON'T LET YOUR MEMBERSHIP LAPSE.**

Annual membership dues are due on the 1st day of January each year. We'd hate to see you miss out on all the information that your membership provides.

**FILL OUT THE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION** on reverse page. Make check payable to NY StateWide Senior Action Council. Mail this form and your check to: c/o Gail Myers, 46 Commonwealth Drive, Glenmont, NY 12077

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