



TESTIMONY

presented by

Lilliam Barrios-Paoli

Commissioner

at a hearing on

The FY 2013 Executive Budget

before the

New York City Council Committees on Aging and Finance

on

Wednesday, May 16, 2012

10:00 AM

at

**City Council Chambers
City Hall**

Good morning, Chairs Lappin and Recchia and members of the Aging and Finance Committees. I am Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, the Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA). Here with me today is Joy Wang, Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Fiscal Operations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the Department for the Aging's Fiscal Year 2013 Executive Budget.

Funding Services for Older New Yorkers

The FY '13 Executive budget is projected at \$235 million in baseline funding and includes allocations of \$106 million to support senior centers, \$31 million for home delivered meals, \$16 million for case management services, \$16 million to support homecare for homebound seniors who are not Medicaid eligible and \$4 million for caregiver support services.

DFTA is fortunate that we do not have required budget reductions for FY '13. I think it is important to recognize that even in the face of the fiscal constraints of recent years, New York City has led the nation in commitment to aging services. The primary source of funding for aging services throughout the country, the Older Americans Act, has remained largely flat-funded for over ten years and New York City government has stepped in to fill the gaps.

This could not be accomplished without the contributions of the City Council, our partners in providing vital services to older New Yorkers. I would especially like to recognize the Council for working with the Administration to baseline \$14 million in discretionary funding for FY '13. Baselineing this funding is crucial because it creates a more stable environment for our non-profit providers, while also allowing DFTA the ability to better plan services and priorities over the long-term.

In order to further stabilize our programs, DFTA relies heavily on the discretionary funding allocated toward space and transportation costs at senior centers as well as the Borough President funding. This funding has become an integral part of the operating budgets of DFTA senior centers and other programs. This funding, integral to stabilizing the senior center network is DFTA's first priority in terms of restorations. I would like to ask the Council to take this into account when negotiating the final budget.

Case Management

DFTA is also grateful to the Council for the restoration of \$3 million in case management funding, as part of the FY '12 adopted budget. DFTA certainly welcomes additional funding for case management through restorations; however, we must be cognizant of the difficulty providers face in carrying out ongoing programming while drawing down discretionary dollars on an annual basis when these dollars make up a large portion of case management budgets. Case management is a service largely driven by staff costs—that is, the salaries of the social workers who work with the case management clients. The significant lag to programs in receiving discretionary funding, and the uncertainty associated with annual discretionary allocations, can make it difficult for case management agencies to operate this staff intensive service.

DFTA is also in the midst of a pilot program with home delivered meal providers, which could have an impact on the caseloads of our case management agencies in the long-term. In October, DFTA began the pilot with the goal of increasing participation in the home delivered meals program (HDML) for six contracts that were experiencing underutilization. While DFTA-funded case management providers continue to assess and authorize clients for home delivered meals, this pilot opens up an additional entry point to HDML programs by allowing HDML providers to identify, assess and authorize clients for the service. Early information suggests that the pilot is having a positive impact on increasing HDML clients, with 528 more clients enrolled for meals on a daily basis as of April 2012. Enrollment has been growing each month as the pilot goes through its start-up period. DFTA is currently assessing the pilot, which will run at least through June, and based on this assessment, DFTA will consider whether to expand the program into the next fiscal year.

Going forward, we expect case management providers to continue their role in assessing and authorizing for meals as well as for other services. However, by opening an additional point of entry for clients that may not need high-intensity services beyond meals, we may be able to achieve reduced caseloads for case management agencies, which are admittedly high in many agencies.

Update on Senior Centers

Since we last met, the Department has made significant progress meeting several important programmatic milestones. On March 27th, proposals were due in for DFTA's Neighborhood Center solicitation. We received 274 proposals to operate a Neighborhood Senior Center, including proposals from providers who have not previously been funded by DFTA. Proposals are being reviewed, and we

expect to have selections made in June with contracts commencing in the Fall. Existing provider contracts are being renewed for FY '13 to ensure that there are no gaps in services. We are grateful to the aging services provider community for their continued focus on providing high-quality, consumer-oriented services at our Neighborhood Centers.

Our Innovative Senior Centers (ISC's) continue to impress us with their creative programming and success in generating interest among the population of older New Yorkers, including those who have never before attended a senior center. The ISC in Staten Island, operated by the Jewish Community Council, opened its doors to over 1,500 applicants for membership. This is certainly a phenomenal response from the community, and we commend them for their outreach efforts.

The ISC serving the special population of the visually impaired, VISIONS, has just begun a meal voucher program that can be redeemed at nearby Olive Garden restaurants at times when VISIONS is not serving a meal, such as during weekends. VISIONS also trained Olive Garden staff on how to assist visually impaired seniors and our nutritionists reviewed the meals to ensure compliance with dietary requirements. The vouchers are a big hit—in fact; one participant reported that the program allowed her to have her first-ever experience in a restaurant.

SNAP of Southeastern Queens has a robust health and wellness program headed by a full-time coordinator. A nurse by training, she not only organizes extensive programming, she sees participants for individual counseling. One diabetic client that she has been working with has reduced her visits to the clinic from every other week to once a month, due to the improved care coordination. We have long known, anecdotally, that our senior center programs serve an important function of helping participants maintain their health and wellness. Through the Innovative Senior Center initiative, we are hopeful about producing data that demonstrate what we have long known—that senior centers are a vital tool in the continuum of care for older New Yorkers. As part of the ISC initiative, DFTA is currently reviewing proposals for Brooklyn ISC's. We look forward to adding innovative Brooklyn providers to our portfolio and expect to announce selections by June 30.

As always, I appreciate the support and partnership of the City Council in these efforts. I am happy to take any questions you may have.

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Name: Bill Choy

Address: Deputy Commissioner DFTA

I represent: _____

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Name: Joy C. Wang

Address: 2 Lafayette St. (9th Fl)

I represent: DFTA

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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Date: _____

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Name: Lillian Barrios Padli

Address: 2 Lafayette St.

I represent: DFTA

Address: _____

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