



TESTIMONY

Presented by

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Commissioner**

on

FY 2023 Executive Budget

before the

**New York City Council
Committee on Aging
and
Finance Committee**

on

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1:45pm**

Good morning, Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and members of the Aging and Finance Committees. I am joined this afternoon by Jose Mercado, our Chief Financial Officer and Michael Ognibene, our Chief Operating Officer. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss DFTA's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2023.

The Department for the Aging administers a wide range of programs that enhance the independence and quality of life for the City's older adult population. The Department's services include older adult centers, home delivered meals, case management services, homecare services, transportation services, caregiver services, mental health and employment counseling and placement for older New Yorkers, and an array of other aging services programming. DFTA also serves as an advocate for the City's older adult population through legislative activity and public policy initiatives.

The Department's Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget provides for operating expenses of \$479.2 million, of which \$288.4 million are City funds. In addition, the Department's Ten-Year Capital Plan includes \$61 million. DFTA's Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget responds to the challenges faced by New York's aging population during the pandemic and lays important foundations for the future, including an expansion in Geriatric Mental Health and Home Delivered Meals. These investments reflect the Adam's Administration's commitment to the Community Care Plan and supports necessary to help older adults remain in their homes.

We are prioritizing several services that meet our primary mission of keeping people safe and healthy at home and in their communities including case management; home care; home delivered meals; caregiver services; transportation; and workforce development to help older people attain financial stability especially in an era of inflation and with so many older adults subsisting on limited incomes. These services build on investments made over the past year to provide older people with opportunities to socialize and connect, including \$48 million in Community Care Plan-driven OAC and NORC investments as well as the technological investments that help connect people with lesser mobility to virtual and other programming.

Geriatric Mental Health Expansion

DFTA's Geriatric Mental Health (DGMH) initiative provides mental health services on-site at 48 older adult centers in the agency's network. Through this program, licensed mental health clinicians utilize engagement and workshops on mental health topics to de-stigmatize mental health, screen participants for depression and anxiety, provide on-site counseling, and give referrals. Overall, participation in this program has led to self-reported reductions in depression and anxiety.

This program will expand to an additional 40 sites within TRIE neighborhoods in Fiscal Year 2023, resulting in a total of 88 sites providing this service on site. The Fiscal Year 23 budget of \$6.4 million for older adult center geriatric mental health programs is almost double what it was in Fiscal Year 22.

The reach of the program exceeds just those 88 sites. DFTA is always looking how to innovate the provision of mental health services and have a greater reach for mental health services. As such, DFTA is conducting a hub-and-spoke model, whereby outreach through engagement activities and assessments are conducted at other OACs within the community. If a mental health need is identified at a satellite site, the client is provided ongoing mental health services at the main OAC designated site. This allows all older adults access to the DGMH program, even if they are not a member at their local center, or the program is not located on site.

Case Management, Home Delivered Meals, and Homecare

Case Management Agencies (CMA) connect homebound seniors to resources and benefits so that they may continue to live independently and safely in their homes and maintain their quality of life. Case Management is the gatekeeper for DFTA funded in-home services such as home delivered meals, home care, friendly visiting and Bill Payer programs. All clients receiving an in-home service funded by DFTA receive a comprehensive assessment from a case management agency. Case managers provide assessments to identify the strengths and needs of older persons and work with clients to plan and coordinate services and resources on their behalf. Older adults can call our Aging Connect hotline or 311 to be connected to a case management agency. Additionally, many are referred to case management providers from older adult centers, meal providers, hospitals and other community-based social service and health care agencies. In FY 2023, \$44.1 million will support case management services for approximately 35,000 clients annually.

Over 85% of case management clients benefit from home-delivered meals services five to seven days a week. DFTA contracts with community-based providers to home-deliver nutritious meals to homebound older adults, age 60 and older, and their dependents if they have a disability. Participants can choose if they would like frozen, fresh-chilled or hot meals as well as from a variety of cultural meals.

In FY 2023, \$60 million will support 5 million home delivered meals. This includes an increase of \$2.3 million in FY 2022 and \$9.4 million in FY 2023 to increase the rate per meal to cover increased cost of food, fuel and labor cost. As the Recovery Meals service sunsets, we also project that up to 3,000 additional older adults who currently receive Recovery Meals will be eligible for case management and home delivered meals. As such, the budget includes an additional \$14.8 million-- \$8.8 million for HDM and \$6 million for CMA-- to support this increased demand.

Caregiver Services

The pandemic has been challenging for everyone, and the strain on caregivers has been significant. DFTA's caregiver support program offers support groups, counseling, trainings, outreach, and information services to unpaid caregivers. Many older adults are caretakers for their aging parent. Many are caregivers who also have full time jobs. The program aims to educate, provide or connect to the wide range of supports caregivers might need. The caregiver program offers options for respite care through home care or participation in social adult day care. Without the respite care, many of these caretakers would not have the financial means or ability to leave the care receiver in someone else's care while they take a needed break from their caregiving responsibilities. Caregiver supports not only allow the older adult to remain safely in their home, but they are also significantly less expensive, with higher positive outcomes, than institutionalization. Caregiver supports also better respond to the unique needs of the diverse aging population.

In addition, the program provides supplemental services which offer limited financial assistance with the purchase of needed assistive devices and other caregiver related expenses. These services help to ease the burden of families and other unpaid caregivers. In some cases, the program helps connect caregivers to home aides. In other cases, caregivers attend workshops to better understand how to care for someone with dementia. Other supports include connecting to additional groups to reduce social isolation. All situations are unique, and the caregiver program seeks to support these diverse needs. In FY 2023, funding for the caregiver program is \$8.1 million. Caregiver supports positively impact the health and wellbeing of older adults while aligning with the cultural background of the individual.

As the aging population continues to diversify and age in place, investments in caregiver supports are important and beneficial.

Conclusion

July 1, 2022 will mark the official start of our new and expanded portfolio of older adult centers and NORCs across the five boroughs, which was among the top priorities of the Community Care Plan. With new contracts and additional sites, our dedicated network of providers will be even better equipped to serve older New Yorkers as they continue to recover from the years-long pandemic. We are incredibly proud of the hard work of our staff and our providers that brought us to this point.

I would be remiss not to also mention our appreciation for the ongoing support of the City Council, which in FY 2022 awarded DFTA with roughly \$41 million in discretionary funding, allowing us to make even greater investments in often unserved or underserved communities. Through this expansion of our OAC and NORC portfolio, we effectively moved \$5.1M of these councilmanic investments into baselined contracts. I urge you to continue your partnership to support the enhancement of these services such as art programming, so that we can continue to diversify educational, art and recreational programming for older adults.

Through the support and advocacy of important stakeholders, we have also advanced many of our efforts to help older New Yorkers in the midst of a pandemic. The last year has challenged us to do more with our existing resources, but I continue to be proud of the work that DFTA has done, including in partnerships with our network of providers dedicated to serving older New Yorkers.

As always, we are grateful to the Chairs and the Committees for your advocacy and continued partnership to support our older New Yorkers. Thank you.