



SERVICE PROGRAM FOR OLDER PEOPLE

**Testimony presented to the**

**Joint Legislative Public Hearing  
on 2025 Executive Budget Proposal  
Topic: Mental Hygiene**

February 5, 2025

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[www.spop.org](http://www.spop.org)

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I would like to thank the Chairs of the New York State Senate and Assembly committees on Mental Health for holding this joint hearing, which recognizes the critical issue of supporting mental health across our state.

My name is Catherine Thurston, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Service Program for Older People, or SPOP. SPOP is the only agency in New York City exclusively dedicated to community-based mental health care for older adults. We are licensed to operate an Article 31 Clinic and PROS program for adults age 55 and older, and we offer services via telehealth and in person at our Manhattan offices and 19 satellite locations throughout Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

We serve over 2,000 adults annually and provide individual and group therapy, psychiatry, medication management, group-based psychiatric rehabilitation support, specialized counseling for substance use disorders, and linkages to other community-based services to support aging in place. Our overarching goal is to support the overall health, well-being, and independence of older adults, and we partner with hospitals, older adult centers, and dozens of community-based organizations to coordinate services and reach out to those who are most vulnerable.

Older adults represent the fastest-growing segment of New York State's population, and they are generally older, more diverse, and more isolated than ever before. An estimated 20% of the population will experience a mental health challenge at some point, but there are few resources in the state specifically for older adults.

I urge the New York State Senate and Assembly to allocate robust funding for mental healthcare for New Yorkers of all ages, including funding specifically for older adults. Age-affirming mental healthcare is one of the best investments that we can make. When we support the emotional health of older adults it can improve their physical health, enable them to live with a greater sense of independence, and reduce social isolation and premature institutionalization.

I thank Senator Brouk and Assemblyperson Simon for their leadership, and the members of the Senate and Assembly committees on Mental Health for all of your support and your work on behalf of older New Yorkers with mental health needs.

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February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
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