



New York Public Welfare Association, Inc.

Founded in 1869

130 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210
Sheila Harrigan, *Executive Director*

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November 4, 2022

Daniel W. Tietz
Commissioner
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
40 North Pearl Street
Albany, New York 12207

Dear Commissioner Tietz:

Thank you for co-hosting the Commissioners' Convening with OCFS and for engaging local commissioners in robust conversations on important matters of public policy. At our NYPWA meeting yesterday, the local commissioners discussed what more would be helpful to them. We identified five issues: workforce, SNAP, streamlining administration, substance abuse sanction policies, and strategies for providing access to housing.

Workforce: Your bold commitment to address our precarious workforce issues is impressive. Thank you for reaching out after the meeting to gather more input. Local commissioners have painted a multi-faceted picture of the challenges they face as they struggle to have enough workers across all program areas. We appreciated the multi-layered discussions at the meeting and your strong support in speeding up the pace of action. We need to keep all the options on the table. It will take multiple strategies to make a difference including competitive Training & Experience exams, decentralizing the social welfare examiner series, the potential use of non-competitive positions, and other ideas that are currently being reviewed or pursued. Local districts want to stay engaged in the conversation with you and the other state agencies.

SNAP: We welcome the formation of a small OTDA-LDSS workgroup to identify ways to streamline SNAP processes. The volume of SNAP applications exceeds current administrative capacity, but actions can be taken. E.g., The wording in the current OTDA SNAP recertification letter leads to an increase in calls which takes time away from processing. We can offer practical, sound suggestions for improvements.

Streamlining Administration:

We can make a huge difference if we tackle the massive plan requirements. We recommend limiting requirements to submit and update plans to the bare essentials. Let the local districts simply check mark that there are no changes to a plan or add a note on what did change. Keep

the OTDA plan requirements stable without updating them each year. Let commissioners know upfront in the plan guidance what is truly required of them so that there is not so much back and forth with revisions. The current process has diminished any potential usefulness that plans might have on a local level. Staff need to spend their time helping families receive the support and assistance they need. The Rental Supplement Plan is a recent example of a labor intensive bureaucratic process that never seemed to end and after all the changes were made at the request of OTDA staff, the LDSS often considered consider the final plan worse than the first version.

We appreciate having you bring attention to 11-INF-07 regarding existing which counties can consider if they have not already done so, and we are open to considering waivers that may have been offered since this INF was issued in 2011.

We support current plans to design IES so that it reduces time on many tasks which are labor intensive. The IES workgroups, which include OTDA staff, have identified countless requirements that slow down the work processes. We need to look no further than this is an existing source of information for any changes needed before IES is fully functional.

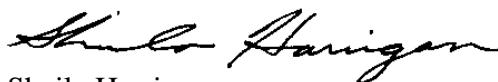
Local Commissioners invite OTDA staff to meet with social welfare examiners in their county offices and see first hand how very cumbersome the administrative processes have become as eligibility workers do their best to process applications and recertifications. It is better to see it and experience it firsthand.

Substance Abuse and Sanctions: This was a spirited discussion. Commissioners would welcome the opportunity to delve into the details of what is being proposed so that they can provide a more useful review and comments. A written draft would be most helpful as people left the meeting without knowing what was being proposed for consideration. It is possible that new ideas could emerge which we would all view as valuable.

Providing access for everyone to have housing is a monumental task. All our collective efforts will never be enough when the money is so low and the housing stock is so scarce. We need an increase in the Family Assistance and Safety Net Assistance allowances for shelter, basic needs, and home energy. We need to restore the state share for SNA. Development of additional housing for people of low income is critical. We appreciate OTDA promoting more housing.

Public Assistance policy issues are complicated. We appreciate your leadership at OTDA and your willingness to delve into the complexity with us in order to pursue long-term solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheila Harrigan', written in a cursive style.

Sheila Harrigan
Executive Director

Cc; Eileen Tiberio
NYPWA President &
Commissioner/Ontario County DSS