

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

UPDATE ALLOWABLE RESOURCE EXEMPTIONS TO QUALIFY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

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The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges the New York State Legislature to pass legislation that would update and expand the resources an applicant for public assistance may possess without affecting eligibility for public assistance.

Low-income families deserve every opportunity to improve their economic well-being. Public assistance is intended to uplift households by providing additional financial support in hopes of breaking the cycle of poverty. However, under New York State law, the requirements applicants must meet to apply for public assistance are antiquated and cause harm to households striving for financial stability. Currently, the requirements do not take into consideration inflation rates or account for the financial harm applicants face when purposely disposing of essential resources that could count against their application. Currently, many applicants find themselves in a cycle of divesting resources, the very resources that could lead to financial stability in the long term, to meet immediate needs.

When fleeing an abusive environment, victims of domestic violence often leave with little to no assets and depend on public assistance to meet their needs as well as the needs of their children. Requiring domestic violence victims to divest themselves of the little resources they have managed to accumulate simply to apply for public assistance directly opposes the goal of public assistance -- to help all individuals achieve financial stability and self-sufficiency.

This bill would amend Social Service Law to exempt and disregard when calculating an individual's amount of benefits:

- \$10,000 of cash and liquid or nonliquid resources in households in which any member is 60 years of age or older, an increase from \$2,500;
- \$7,050 of vehicle purchase funds, an increase from \$4,600;
- \$5,165 for college tuition or the maximum tuition assistance program award available for the current academic year, whichever is greater;
- Funeral agreements at any value; and,
- Retirement accounts, including IRAs, 401(k)'s, 403(b)'s, and Keogh plans, and all 529 college savings plans.

Further, court ordered child support which is paid or withheld from income shall not be considered available income.

NYSCADV urges the Legislature to pass this legislation ensuring applicants for public assistance do not have to divest themselves of certain resources to qualify for public assistance.

ABOUT NYSCADV:

Established in 1978, NYSCADV is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the information clearinghouse, primary point of contact, and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. NYSCADV is responsible for supporting the development of policies, protocol, and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention and also provides education and technical assistance to the network of primary-purpose domestic violence service providers statewide.

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