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NEW YORK STATE GOOD GUARDIANSHIP ACT INTRODUCED

Legislation will bolster Article 81 guardianship service capacity statewide, fulfilling key pillar of State Master Plan for Aging

Albany, NY — Guardianship Access New York (GANY) proudly announces the introduction of the **New York State Good Guardianship Act**, groundbreaking legislation to modernize and strengthen New York State’s guardianship system and ensure that older adults and individuals with disabilities receive the protection and support they need. The [NYS Master Plan for Aging](#) keenly identified Article 81 guardianship reform and investment as “high priority and feasibility.” This bill will directly implement that recommendation.

GANY extends its deep appreciation to Aging Committee Chair, Senator Cordell Cleare and Judiciary Committee Chair, Assemblymember Charles Lavine for sponsoring this vital legislation and for their leadership in advancing guardianship reform as a core component of New York’s Master Plan for Aging (MPA).

“This legislation represents our commitment to protecting the dignity and rights of older adults and people with disabilities across New York State,” said Senator Cordell Cleare. “For far too long, the guardianship system has lacked the resources and oversight necessary to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents. I applaud the Master Plan on Aging for recognizing the needs of the Article 81 guardianship system and am proud to sponsor the New York Good Guardianship Act which lays the groundwork for a safer, more equitable, and more responsive system of care.”

“Ensuring that every New Yorker has access to a responsible, well-supported guardian when they need one is both a moral imperative and a practical necessity,” said Assemblymember Charles Lavine. “Earlier this year, we convened stakeholders on Long Island to identify service gaps, challenges and potential solutions. This legislation is reflective of those conversations and would strengthen safeguards, improve service

capacity, and advance the core values of accountability and compassion that should define our guardianship system.”

“The New York Good Guardianship Act is a long-overdue step toward building a fairer, more accountable, and more compassionate guardianship system,” said Kimberly George, President and CEO of Project Guardianship and a founding member of the GANY Coalition. “Too many New Yorkers fall through the cracks because they lack the support and oversight a modern guardianship system should provide. This bill lays the foundation for meaningful change.”

Karen Nicolson, CEO of the Center for Elder Law & Justice, underscored the importance of equitable access. “Across the state, thousands of people in need of guardianship go without one, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, eviction, and loss of autonomy. The Good Guardianship Act creates clear standards and supports for nonprofit programs that meet these unmet needs while protecting the dignity of the individual.”

According to Project Guardianship’s [Cost-Benefit Analysis report](#), released earlier this year, effective guardianship services not only protect vulnerable New Yorkers but also generate significant fiscal benefits by reducing unnecessary hospitalization, keeping people in their homes and out of institutions, preventing homelessness, and easing strain on the courts and social services systems. The analysis found that a \$15 million investment in nonprofit guardians would generate net savings of \$85 million, primarily in unspent Medicaid dollars.

In New York City, the guardianship crisis is particularly acute. The city’s aging population—now exceeding 1.7 million adults over age 60—is projected to grow by more than 40 percent over the next two decades. Yet the infrastructure to support court-appointed guardians has not kept pace.

Each year, hundreds of vulnerable New Yorkers remain on waiting lists for guardianship appointments due to a shortage of qualified nonprofit guardians and insufficient funding for oversight. The city’s Article 81 guardianship courts face mounting backlogs, and many individuals live for months without a guardian even after being declared in need of one. Hospitals and social service agencies often delay discharges or housing placements because no one is legally authorized to make medical or financial decisions on behalf of the person.

These guardianship challenges extend far beyond New York City. Across the state, communities are facing critical gaps that mirror—and in some cases exceed—the shortages seen in the city. In places like Buffalo, Rochester, and Long Island, nonprofits have stepped in to build programs to fill the gap, but these organizations are far too under-

resourced to meet the growing need. In other areas such as Albany, there are no nonprofit guardianship providers at all, despite the presence of organizations that are willing and able to do the work if funding were available. Meanwhile, in counties like Westchester and Putnam, existing programs are on the brink of closure due to chronic underfunding. These statewide disparities leave thousands of New Yorkers without access to guardianship services and contribute to preventable crises in hospitals, housing, and social service systems.

Chronic underfunding and staffing shortages limit nonprofit's capacity to accept new clients. Without adequate support, too many New Yorkers experience unnecessary institutionalization, financial exploitation, or loss of housing—disproportionately affecting low-income older adults and people with disabilities. GANY and its member organizations serve individuals of all ages living with a range of conditions, including Alzheimer's disease, Autism, developmental disabilities, brain injuries, and serious mental health challenges, each requiring compassionate, person-centered guardianship services that respect individual dignity and autonomy.

"AARP believes states should establish and adequately fund public guardianship programs. New Yorkers deserve a system that protects their rights while ensuring safety and dignity," said Beth Finkel, State Director of AARP New York. "The Good Guardianship Act helps achieve that and brings our state one step closer to a guardianship system that truly serves the people."

Allison Nickerson, Executive Director of LiveOn NY added: "This legislation answers a critical need in our aging and disability communities. By investing in better oversight, transparency, and access, New York can lead the nation in compassionate guardianship reform."

The GANY Coalition urges all lawmakers to support this crucial legislation and move swiftly to enact the New York Good Guardianship Act—a key pillar of the Master Plan for Aging and a cornerstone of a more just, effective, and person-centered system. Accordingly, we call on the Governor and Legislature to include \$15 million in funding in the SFY 2027 Budget to directly enhance and expand services.

About Guardianship Access New York (GANY)

Founded in 2022 by Project Guardianship, Guardianship Access New York (GANY) is a statewide coalition of nonprofit providers and allies advocating for adequate public investment in guardianship services and alternatives. Together, GANY members work to ensure that every New Yorker in need of guardianship receives compassionate, accountable, and equitable support.

