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## **BELLONE, CALARCO AND ANKER ANNOUNCE SUFFOLK COUNTY'S PARTICIPATION IN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM** <sup>[1]</sup>



[2]

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Today, County Executive Bellone was joined by Legislator Rob Calarco, Legislator Sarah Anker, Mayor Paul Pontieri, and representatives from AARP and the Suffolk County Office for the Aging to announce Suffolk County's participation in AARP's network of Age-Friendly Communities.

To ensure Suffolk County's full participation in the program, Bellone will convene Blue Ribbon Commission comprised of a representative from the Suffolk County Senior Advisory Council, senior community leaders representing each town and representatives from appropriate Suffolk County departments to review AARP's criteria for Age-Friendly Communities as well as make recommendations for implementation within Suffolk County.

"As we continue to promote economic development and an innovation economy it only makes sense for Suffolk County to support AARP's Age Friendly Communities program as it

will provide yet another platform to attract and retain residents, provide varied business opportunities and build infrastructure and policies that support all ages of residents,” stated County Executive Bellone.

An Age Friendly Community entails an inclusive and accessible urban or suburban environment that encourages active and healthy aging through the promotion of the following:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings – accessibility to and availability of clean, safe community centers, parks, and other recreational facilities;
- Transportation – safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation, “Complete Streets” types of initiatives, hospitable built environments;
- Housing – wide range of housing options for older residents, ageing in place and other home modification programs, housing that is accessible to transportation and community and health services;
- Social participation – access to leisure and cultural activities; opportunities for older residents to participate in social and civic engagement with their peers and younger people;
- Respect and social inclusion – programs to support and promote ethnic and cultural diversity, programs to encourage multigenerational interaction and dialogue, programs to combat loneliness and isolation among older residents;
- Civic participation and employment – promotion of paid work and volunteer opportunities for older residents; opportunities for older residents to engage in formulation of policies relevant to their lives;
- Communication and information – promotion of and access to the use of technology to keep older residents connected to their community and friends and family, both near and far; and
- Community support and health services – access to homecare services, clinics, programs to promote active ageing (physical exercise and healthy habits)

“By joining AARP’s network of Age-Friendly Communities, Suffolk is signaling our dedication to creating neighborhoods throughout the county that are safe, accessible and livable for people from all generations,” said Legislator Rob Calarco. “I am proud to be standing alongside County Executive Bellone to make this announcement today in downtown Patchogue, where convenience and walkability are always top priorities where community planning is concerned. With this move today, we can be sure that those priorities will be implemented across Suffolk County, to the benefit of people of all ages.”

“The Age-Friendly Community concept which closely aligns with AARP’s livable communities policies and initiatives, helps ensure that all Suffolk County residents have a better quality of life now and in the future, said Legislator Sarah Anker. “As a Blue Ribbon Commission member, I look forward to providing input that will improve infrastructure to secure the future of Suffolk County.”

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Cities is affiliated with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program®, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. The program currently has 137 participating communities in 21 countries around the world, as well as 10 country affiliates representing over 1,000 communities.

“AARP New York is pleased to welcome Suffolk County into the AARP network of Age Friendly Communities,” said Will Stoner, AARP New York Associate State Director for Long Island. “Suffolk County has already taken steps towards being a more livable community, with such accomplishments as passing Complete Streets legislation and creating accessible affordable housing. This designation builds on the great work already in progress and ongoing.”

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