

**Montgomery County, Maryland
Commission on Aging
Annual Report
2014**



**Montgomery County, Maryland
Department of Health and Human Services**



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Letter from the Chair of the Commission on Aging

March 2015



The Honorable Isiah Leggett
The Honorable George Leventhal

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging is pleased to present its Annual Report for 2014. The Report describes the activities of the Commission as an advisor to County Government and as an advocate for the interests and concerns of older County adults residing in the County.

This has been another important year for the Commission in heightening awareness and achieving action on the concerns of the growing and diverse population of older County adults residing in the County. This year we continued the work of making Montgomery County into *A Community for a Lifetime* with the *Senior Agenda* as a guidepost and framework for our activities. The Commission on Aging takes seriously its responsibilities, including serving as the Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging as mandated by the Older American Act.

The Commission on Aging focused its efforts this year on accomplishing the goals and visions of the *Senior Agenda*. The Commission's advocacy efforts on state legislation and County program and budget recommendations related directly to the *Senior Agenda*. While budget recommendations this year focused on continuing to improve and enhance current programs as well as new efforts, we remain sensitive to the economic issues affecting the County. We are also proud of the partnership we maintain with various Boards, Commissions and Government Agencies.

The Commission thanks County Executive Leggett for his strong leadership and committed actions on behalf of the County's aging population and the County Council for the interest and support that have helped maintain and expand programs that serve older adults.

We also give sincere thanks and recognition to Director of Health and Human Services Uma Ahluwalia and Director of Recreation Gabe Albornoz, who co-chair the Subcabinet on Senior Vital Living, for their leadership and responsiveness to the issues raised by the Commission.

Finally, the Commission expresses its respect and deep appreciation to two individuals who have provided exceptional support and wise guidance. Dr. John (Jay) Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, and Dr. Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging and Executive Secretary of the Commission, both of the Department of Health and Human Services. Like so many outstanding professionals working for the County, their contributions, invaluable to the Commission, have contributed enormously to the wellbeing of older adults in the County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Judith Levy". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Judith Levy, Chair
Commission on Aging

Montgomery County Commission on Aging 2014

Commission Officers

Judith Levy, Chair
Grace Whipple, 1st Vice Chair
Tamara Duell, 2nd Vice Chair
Myrna Cooperstein, Secretary

Committee, Task Force and Forum Chairs

Aging in Place and Community: Noelle Heyman and Miriam Kelty
Communications and Community Outreach: Barbara Mulitz and Reuben Rosenfeld
Data Task Force: Sam Korper
Health and Wellness: Tamara Duell and Grace Whipple
Public Policy: DaCosta Mason and Rudy Oswald
Seniors Today Task Force: Barbara Mulitz and Reuben Rosenfeld
Stakeholders Forum: Spencer Schron and Grace Whipple

Commission on Aging Members

Frederic Burke	Georgia S. Guenther	Lance Kilpatrick	Rudolph Oswald	Revathi Vikram
Doris Chapman	Noelle R. Heyman	Sam Korper	Reuben Rosenfeld	Grace Whipple
Myrna Cooperstein	Song Hutchins	Judith Levy	Isabelle Schoenfeld	Syed Yusuf
Morton A. Davis	Arva Jackson	DaCosta Mason	Spencer Schron	
Paul Del Ponte	Charles Kauffman	Jerry Morenoff	Sally Shea	
Tamara Duell	Miriam Kelty	Barbara Mulitz	John Sprague	

Liaisons to Commission on Aging

Aging and Disability Services: John (Jay) Kenney
City of Gaithersburg Fire and Rescue: Matt Kelleher
City of Rockville Commission on Aging: Morris Casper
City of Takoma Park: Karen Maricheau
Commission on Health: Marcia Pruzan
Commission on People with Disabilities: Seth Morgan
Department of Housing and Community Affairs: Leslie Marks
Department of Recreation: Jeffrey Bourne and Phil Smakula
Department of Transportation: Stacy Jackson
Ethnics Affairs Committee: Patricia Lesnick
Housing Opportunities Commission: Gail Gunod-Green
I Kaur Foundation: Mirin Phool
Maryland Commission on Aging: Maria V. Jimenez
Montgomery County Fire and Rescue: John Best and Jim Resnick
Montgomery County Public Library (Potomac): Nancy Savas
Office of Community Partnerships: Austin Heyman
Vital Living Network: Mike Greenhut

Department of Health and Human Services Staff

Odile Brunetto, Aging and Disability Services
Pazit Aviv, Aging and Disability Services
Shawn Brennan, Aging and Disability Services
Emily Glazer, Aging and Disability Services
Tremayne Jones, Aging and Disability Services

Enabling Legislation

The Commission on Aging, established in 1974, operated under the auspices of the County Council until August 1987, when its operation was transferred to the Executive Branch. Chapter 27, Article III of the Montgomery County Code created the Commission on Aging under the declared public policy of the County to:

- Improve conditions of the aging or elderly in the county;
- Work toward the elimination of restrictions that impede older citizens from full participation in the mainstream of community life; and
- Assist and stimulate all levels of government and the community to be more responsive to the needs of the county's older residents.

In addition, the Commission on Aging serves as the Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging as described in the federal Older Americans Act. Members of the Commission are appointed by the County Executive subject to confirmation by the County Council. Under a section specifying powers and duties of the Commission, there are several provisions outlining a broad spectrum of powers. The following two subsections provide a good example of the breadth of the Commission's power:

The Commission shall have the power...

- (a) To research, assemble, analyze and disseminate pertinent data and educational materials relating to activities and programs which will assist in meeting the needs and solving the problems of the aging; to cooperate with public and private agencies, organizations, and individuals in identifying and solving the problems of the aging; to develop and conduct, as appropriate, in cooperation with county government and other services and programs dealing with the problems and needs of the aging.
- (g) To advise and counsel the residents of the county, the County Council, the County Executive and the various departments of county, state and federal governments on matters involving the needs of the aging, and to recommend such procedures, programs or legislation as it may deem necessary and proper to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all persons, regardless of their age. ■

Commission Membership

The Commission on Aging consists of no fewer than 18 members appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. Members must be county residents of whom a majority shall be age 60 and older. Members include: those who participate in or who are eligible to participate in programs under the Older Americans Act; local elected officials or their designees, individuals who are or who have been active in government, business, industry, labor, community service, religious, social services, education, the professions; and representatives of major organizations or agencies concerned with aging. ■

Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Area Agency on Aging

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA), is responsible for the provision of a continuum of home and community-based services and provides staff support to the Commission on Aging. In conjunction with community partners, the AAA is involved in administering County and state grant awards to contractors for services, public education/outreach, networking, and referrals.

AAAs were established under the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973 to respond to the needs of Americans ages 60 and older in every local community. The AAA strives to develop a range of options that allow older adults to choose the home and community-based services and living arrangements that suit them best. The AAA is part of a national network of over 670 AAAs established under the OAA to improve the quality of life for older persons by creating a network that maintains a holistic view of aging. The AAA are mandated to "foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems to serve older individuals..."

Highlights of AAA Activities in Fiscal Year 2014:

- Staff from the Aging and Disability Services Line, a Maryland Access Point, answered nearly 23,000 calls to assist seniors, persons with disabilities and their families, providing access to information and needed short- and long-term care services offered both by the County and our nonprofit partners.
- The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program conducted more than 4,000 visits to long-term care facilities and investigated 243 formal complaints. The program has a dedicated volunteer corps of 50 state certified individuals serving 227 facilities.
- The Public Guardianship program served 101 persons in need of protective services as determined by the courts, conducting almost 1,000 face-to-face contacts with these clients. Additionally, the program conducted six education and training events for more than 300 participants.
- The Senior Nutrition Program served 6,391 clients and provided more than 335,000 meals, both in congregate sites and through home-delivered meals.
- The AAA, via contracts with the Gaithersburg Upcounty Senior Center and the Mobile Dentist, provided dental care and dentures to 118 seniors lacking insurance.
- The Nurses team conducted 2,000 Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) evaluations, which are mandated to enable eligible persons to receive community-based, long-term Medicaid-funded services. An additional 375 evaluations were assigned to State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene contract nurses. These contracted nurses conduct AERS evaluations for individuals as part of the new Community First Choice Program.
- The AAA currently provides nurse monitoring services (via its contract partners) to more than 2,000 Community First Choice Program clients. These clients receive services via the Community Options Waiver, Community First Choice, or Medical Assistance Personal Care programs.
- The AAA Supports Planning Agency serve 600 Community First Choice clients.
- The Health and Wellness program served 400 individuals through health screening sessions and nearly 1,000 individuals through health education sessions. The Health and Wellness program also organized Falls Prevention sessions through classes such as "Bone Builders" and "A Matter of Balance," which served 1500 individuals.
- The new Mobility and Transportation Manager has conducted extensive outreach and training towards promoting and helping to improve transportation and mobility options for seniors and people with disabilities, and successfully secured grant funds.

Commission Activities and Priorities

- The new Villages Coordinator has assisted approximately 25 villages in the County.

Commission Activities and Priorities

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging is working toward making our County a place where residents can live their entire lives. By the year 2020, the senior population of Montgomery County will increase by 74 percent, with approximately one-in-four residents over the age of 60. Moreover, Montgomery County has the largest share of Hispanic and Asian elderly in the state and other diverse groups of older adult residents. This dramatic demographic shift has been the impetus for expanding current and establishing new priorities for seniors issues.

More than 25 percent of County seniors age 65 and older, the majority of whom are women, live alone. An estimated 18 percent of seniors have a limitation in performing activities of daily living. Depending on their income level, they need different services. For some, case management, transportation, in-home assistance, dental services, congregate and home-delivered meals are essential. In addition, respite care is often needed in situations where the senior lives with a caregiver.

The Commission takes seriously its obligations to be a responsible and effective voice for older adults in the community. With a vision and goals outlined in *A Community for a Lifetime: A Senior Agenda*, the Commission realized we could not focus on all areas; therefore, our main efforts this year included transportation, housing, socialization, security, and health and wellness. The Commission also continues its focus on caregiving and caregivers.

During the year we conducted numerous activities, outlined below, in support of our visions and goals. Among speakers at various Commission meetings throughout the year were: Councilmember at-Large Hans Reimer; Leslie Marks, Senior Housing Fellow; Debbie Feinstein, Chief, Family Violence Division; Robert Hill, Deputy

Chief, Family Violence Division; and Tricia Wilson, InterAges.

Retreat

This year, the Commission also realized that we needed to evaluate how we function as a Commission and whether we could be more effective to meet the challenges of the seniors we represent. On September 17, 2014, the Commission held a retreat with the goal of evaluating current structure, activities, and membership composition and making recommendations. In 2015, a workgroup of four Commissioners and the Chair will meet to develop final recommendations based on the results of the retreat and will present them to the Commission at the COA Annual Meeting in June.



Commissioners at work

Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Commission Activities and Priorities

The Commission on Aging's initiative this year showed once again that it is an effective voice in advising County government and in advocating at the local, state, and federal levels for policies and programs on issues that affect the County's older adults. The following are just some examples of the dynamic activism of this Commission.



Commissioners at work

Legislative Activity. During the state legislative session in Annapolis, Commissioners, led by Public Policy Committee co-chairs DaCosta Mason and Rudy Oswald, identified more than 100 bills as affecting seniors. Members of the Commission testified on two bills dealing with the training of wire transfer agents to prevent elder abuse and another bill expanding the definition of breach of fiduciary duty in the protection of vulnerable adults. Letters of support were sent in behalf of six bills dealing with health issues, financial abuse, long-term care insurance, and family caregiving.

On November 19, 2014, the Commission held its annual Legislative Breakfast. Sixteen state senators and delegates attended, representing more than half of Montgomery County's state legislative delegates. The Commission presented an overview of its state legislative priority, which included caregiving, elder abuse, and paid safe and sick leave.

The legislators discussed some of their priorities issues, which included transfer on death deeds, first responders' rights to enter homes, protections for nursing home residents from sex offenders residing in nursing homes.

County Budget. The Commission on Aging recognizes and appreciates the efforts of the County Executive in recent years, and the current FY15 budget, that responded to the needs of both vulnerable, low-income and healthier, vital older adults. After several years of cut-backs to services to seniors, the current budget includes moderate increases to services for seniors across several departments.



County Executive Isiah Leggett and Uma Ahluwalia, Director of Health and Human Services present Odile Brunetto, Director of the Area Agency on Aging, with the 2014 National Association of Counties Award for the achievement of the Senior Initiative. Also attending are John Kenney, Chief of Aging and Disability Services and Commission on Aging Chair, Judith Levy.

In the spring, Commissioners met with each County Council member to support the County Executives' FY15 budget enhancements for seniors and to demonstrate how they related to the priorities of the *Senior Agenda*. Commission committees worked early in the fall to identify budget priorities for FY16 and the Commission gave early testimony to the Health and Human Services Committee of the County Council. The Commission continued to urge the County to consider the overall needs of older adults and the cumulative effect of programs when changes are made.

On October 16, 2014, Commission Chair Judith Levy spoke on budget priorities to the HHS Committee of the County Council. On October 20, 2014 Commissioner Arva Jackson testified at the Health and Human Services Committee FY Budget Forum. The Commission also submitted FY16 budget recommendations to County Executive Isiah Leggett.

Caregivers and Caregiving. The Commission continues to focus on caregiver services and supports, with the goal of establishing a Caregivers Coalition in the future. On February 28, 2014, the Stakeholders Forum Task Force held its Stakeholder Forum on Family Caregiving. There were 105 attendees, 77 of whom were members of the public. Forty-three of the members of the public identified themselves as family caregivers. The Forum was moderated by Elinor Ginzler, a nationally recognized expert in family caregiving. This program allowed family caregivers to ask questions and raise issues that they face. This was a very successful effort in demonstrating caregivers' needs.

On May 22, 2014, the Commission held its Annual Meeting with the theme of Family Caregiving. Commissioner Paul Del Ponte moderated a panel that included: Ian Kramer, Executive Director of Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer's Disease; Joann Lynn, MD, Director, Altarum's Center for Elder Care and Advanced Illness; and Arva Jackson, COA Commissioner.

The panel discussed issues of caregiving from their perspectives.

County Executive Isiah Leggett also attended the Commission's Annual Meeting. He spoke of his support of the *Senior Agenda*, his concern for the needs of family caregivers, accomplishments regarding safety and security for seniors in the County, the concern about affordable housing, and the need for a new part-time Senior Fellow position focusing on family caregiving.

For the second summer in a row, the Commission chose to delve further into issues affecting caregivers. The title of the Summer Study was Family Caregiver Support: An Exploration of Best Practices and Approach Models.

Commission Outreach and Partnership.

The Commission continues to form liaisons with other Boards, Commissions, and Stakeholder groups. In addition, most Commission members are involved with other groups and activities that support senior services. For example, outgoing Commissioner Morton Davis has for many years been involved with a program with the Police Department program called "Keep Seniors Safe." This program's goal is to educate seniors regarding all types of security and safety issues, from financial to physical.

Transportation and Mobility. Being able to go where they want to go, when they want to go, and how they want to go remains the single greatest challenge older adults face in their ability to remain independent. The inability to have adequate, easily accessible transportation results in fewer opportunities for socialization, physical activity, and mental stimulation, all of which are essential to seniors' ability to maintain a healthy, vital life style. This year Shawn Brennan filled the position of Mobility and Transportation Manager. The Commission sees this as a positive step in continued efforts to develop a comprehensive senior transportation plan based on the vision and broad goals of the *Senior Agenda*.

Commission Activities and Priorities

Ms. Brennan and the Chair of the Commission met with Council Member Hans Reimer to discuss issues concerning transportation and other *Senior Agenda* issues.

Diversity. The Commission recognizes the changes in Montgomery County's demographics and strives to be inclusive. To help us better understand some of those needs, at the April 24, 2014, Commission meeting, the COA hosted a panel discussion with members of the South Asian Community about the needs of older adults in their community.

Expansion of Services. In March 2014, Commission members and HHS staff toured the new Holy Cross Hospital construction site in Germantown. Holy Cross has been a leader in recognizing the needs of the senior population. It was the first and only hospital in this area to open a special emergency department for seniors.



Members of the Commission on Aging visit the construction site of the new Holy Cross Hospital in Germantown.

Planning, Development, and Data. The Commission has always placed the ability to age in place and with dignity as the platform for much of its work. The Commission Planning Process Summer Study arose from concerns that despite the increasing number of older adults in the County, they lack adequate visibility and representation in the County's planning process when Master Plans and Sectors are being developed. The three-session study investigated the roles of the County Planning Department and Board, Executive Departments, County Council, developers, the public, and the COA in addressing senior concerns in planning.

The Commission has established a Data Task Force in the belief that a review of the available senior-related data and the potential for gathering new data to fill existing gaps is essential to full implementation of the Commission's *Senior Agenda*. This review will also provide a better general understanding of the information databases currently available to describe the health status of Montgomery County's older residents, such as the indicators available on the "Healthy Montgomery" website www.healthymontgomery.org. By reviewing currently available resources and determining what new data might be collected in the future, the Task Force will be able to better understand how best to measure the impact of programs available to address the health needs of the older population.

Moving Forward with the Senior Agenda. While the County has taken many steps to improve services for older residents, we continue to believe that it is important for the County to have a comprehensive agenda that sets out a direction for the future—one that will help guide and ensure progress to address senior needs. The Commission understands the importance of establishing priorities and making sure we have a systematic approach. The *Senior Agenda*, with supportive programming and budgetary actions each year, demonstrates a commitment to that goal.

FY14 Committee Activities

Aging in Place in the Community

The Aging in Place in the Community Committee (AIPC) continued to monitor developments, progress, and needs in transportation, housing and Montgomery County Villages, public policy, and potential legislative opportunities. The County and its communities have adopted the Village Movement with approximately 25 villages in various degrees of development.

In the area of transportation enhancements, Connect-a-Ride and All Around the County programs in particular increase awareness of the need and availability of transportation for older residents across the County. In addition, the AIPC met with Jeff Dunckle, the County's Department of Transportation Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, to review the progress of pedestrian safety initiatives and identify ongoing needs. Engineering and pedestrian safety improvements have reduced collisions substantially. However, pedestrian deaths due to auto accidents are increasing in high-traffic intersections. Plans for improvements are under way. Efforts to make sidewalks safer, reduce mid-block crossings, and improve lighting, signage, and enforcement are also under consideration.

The AIPC and the Village Coordinator worked closely together to reach out to diverse and faith-based communities, monitor villages, and assist emerging villages by providing resources and information about County programs.

Jim Resnick, Program Manager for Senior Outreach Services, Department of Fire and Rescue, presented his strategy to improve fire safety for older residents during a combined meeting of Aging and Place Committee and Health and Wellness Committees. Mr. Resnick continues outreach efforts to develop partnerships with nonprofit and others in the County in order to improve his access to education and assessment of frail elders in the community.

At a joint meeting of the AIPC and Health and Wellness Committees, Robert Jenkens, Senior Vice President and Director of Social Impact Initiatives for the National Cooperative Bank, shared insights about developing affordable housing and affordable assisted living for older County residents. He described the complicated financing process involved in developing both assisted living and affordable housing projects, explained the planning and zoning processes, and identified options and opportunities for increasing the numbers of affordable assisted living facilities.

Communications and Community Outreach

In 2014, The Committee continued its work exploring opportunities to engage stakeholders, conducted outreach to older adults in diverse communities, and listened directly to the needs of seniors throughout the County.

The Communications and Community Outreach Committee began 2014 by working with the Office of Public Information to review brochures on a range of topics for older adults and the County website for ease of use and access. A variety of these brochures were sent to County residents with their real property tax statements.

Through this collaboration, the Committee continues to seek ways to improve County publications designed specifically for seniors. Members of the Committee attended the Senior Subcabinet meetings on Communication held by the Office of Public Information throughout the year. At these meetings, commissioners continued to emphasize the need for senior-specific County publications and the need for publication uniformity in both appearance and branding.

FY14 Committee Activities

The Office of Public Information supported these requests and created cover stock inserts for direct mail to publicize a variety of senior resources, with continuing plans for printed outreach efforts. Committee members provided input and assisted in editing these inserts. These efforts are an intended mechanism to inform and encourage older adults to engage and access County services and resources. The Committee continued to stress the need for printed materials for seniors as older seniors predominately seek County resources through printed materials. The COA looks forward to implementation of its suggestions for printed materials, website enhancements, and promotion of its monthly cable television show, *Seniors Today*.

The Committee continued to focus on the need for collection of data to identify and understand the needs and concerns of older adults living in diverse communities. As a result of this request, the County has begun to formally collect data about needs of older adults in the County's diverse communities and to develop workgroups to explore those needs.

During this past year, the Committee also continued reaching out directly to the community through a forum for listening to the concerns of older adults. The Ring House offered a valuable venue for engaging older adults residing in an independent and assisted living community. Moderated by COA commissioners, these events presented an opportunity to hear about concerns and ideas of older adults as they age in their communities. The event also provided valuable information from those directly affected by cuts and scarce County resources. The CCO plans to present its pilot project conclusion to the COA Executive Committee and to expand the listening forum to include the entire Commission and additional communities that support older adults.

Continuing to explore the results of the February 2014 Stakeholders Forum focused on caregivers, the CCO discussed opportunities to utilize social media to connect and communicate with caregivers in a variety of situations. In 2015 the CCO will provide content to a variety of County e-newsletters focused on older adult issues.

Seniors Today. The cable television show, *Seniors Today*, continues to present relevant and engaging programming. Important 2014 episodes have included: Neil Potter Path of Achievement Award winners; Older Drivers and Safety Issues; Reverse Mortgages; Seniors and Technology; *How to Retire Smart*, an engaging book by Nancy Schlossburg; and the importance of life-long learning.

Health and Wellness Committee

This year, the Senior Health and Wellness Committee continued to focus on topics and issues that support positive physical and mental health of older adults who reside in Montgomery County and explore challenges to positive health and gaps in services and support.

Caregiver Services and Supports. The Health and Wellness Committee continued its focus on caregiver services and supports in Montgomery County by learning more about existing County programs, including respite services, and by advocating, along with the full Commission on Aging, for additional funding for a Caregiver Coalition, restoration of a long-term care ombudsman position, and increases in funding for adult foster care and medical adult day care subsidies.

Mental Health. The Committee continued to focus on topics and issues that support positive physical and mental health of older adults who reside in Montgomery County. We explored challenges to positive health and gaps in services and support. Further, we provided information about specific behavioral health challenges for many older adults to Health Montgomery's Behavioral Health Workgroup and the County's Mental Health Advisory Committee.

Also noteworthy, a committee representative joined the Healthy Montgomery Behavioral Health Task Force to provide information and insight related to the mental and behavioral health needs of older adults.

Affordable Dental Care. With concern about affordable and accessible dental care for older adults, members of the Health and Wellness Committee met with representatives from Montgomery County's Dental Services Program to learn more about care options and accessibility for the County's senior population. The Committee made several recommendations for enhancing access for low-income seniors and wrote a letter to support of state legislation that allows for continued use of dental hygienists in nursing facilities.

Montgomery County Recreation Department—Senior Program. The Committee learned more about the Senior Center Plus Program Model. This model is working well in other areas of the State to provide meaningful recreation opportunities and support for individuals who, because of physical and/or cognitive challenges, are not able to safely participate in traditional County recreation programs. The Recreation Department is receptive to piloting a Senior Center Plus Program at one of the County's community centers. Discussions currently are underway with potential community partners who are interested in providing this service.

Healthy Montgomery. The Committee continued to receive updates from the Commission's liaison to this group. A Committee member joined Healthy Montgomery's Behavioral Health Workgroup to represent the needs of older adults with mental and behavioral concerns, including dementia.

Elizabeth Square. The Committee participated in a joint meeting with the Commission's Aging in Place Committee to learn more about the plans to rebuild the Housing Opportunities Commission Elizabeth House in downtown Silver Spring and expand health and wellness, art, and socialization programs and opportunities to Elizabeth House residents. The Committee was able to ask questions about the project and provide input especially related to the transportation and mobility needs of older adults.

Mobility Resources and Driver Support.

The Committee learned more about programs offered to assist older adults with mobility and transportation needs in the County and discussed driver safety. The Committee recommends additional study and work to identify strategies the County can use to support drivers, including older drivers.

Data Needs. The Committee continued to work with the Data Task Force to help develop a plan to gain additional information about the County's senior population in order to assist with program development and other future planning needs.

Public Policy Committee

The Public Policy Committee (PPC) examines policies, programs, and proposals of the local, state, and federal governments for their effects on the lives of County seniors. The *Senior Agenda*, developed by the Commission and approved by the County Executive and the County Council in 2012, served as a guide to PPC in making legislative and budget recommendations.

State-Level Activities. The Maryland legislature met from January 8 to April 17, 2014. The Commission, through the PPC, reviewed, monitored, and/or suggested action on more than 100 bills focused on Commission priorities of caregiving, elder abuse, health and wellness, and protection of vulnerable adults. With the assistance of other committees, the Commission provided in-person or written testimony on 10 bills. Seven of these bills were enacted into law. Most satisfying was passage of HB 723 by Delegate Benjamin Kramer that calls attention to financial abuse on wire transfer transactions. The Commission also actively supported certain state budget items, some of which were adopted.

On November 19, 2014, the Committee organized the COA's Annual State Legislator's

Montgomery County Commission on Aging

FY14 Committee Activities

Breakfast. More than half of the County's state delegation attended the event. The Commission presented an overview of its 2015 state legislative priorities (caregiving, elder abuse and paid safe and sick leave). The legislators discussed some of their priority issues, which included, but were not limited to transfer on death deeds; first responders' right to enter homes; protections for nursing homes residents from sex offenders residing in the nursing homes; as well as the issues that the Commission noted. The legislators and the Commission will partner to seek passage of bills on these issues in the upcoming legislative session.



Commissioner Revathi Vikram and Delegate Charles Barkley

County-Level Activities. The PPC led the Commission's activities on the County budget process. The Commission submitted budget priorities in support of seniors. It called for funding a Senior Fellow to provide Caregiver support, and additional support for Adult Day Care and the Adult Foster Care Programs. The Commission advocated for the restoration of a position in the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, a social worker to handle the increased caseload of adult financial abuse, and a fire department officer to

serve the needs of seniors. It also supported the expansion of Recreation Department and library hours and programs to promote the vital living of older adults.

The Commission testified at budget forums held by the County Executive and met with him on budget priorities. The Commission testified before County Council Committees and the full Council on budget hearings. The PPC helped organize meetings with individual Council members. Many of the Commission's priorities were included in the final budget adopted by the Executive and the Council. The Commission also testified in support of an increase in the County's supplement to low-income senior property owners under the state's circuit-breaker property tax law. As a follow-up to the 2013 passage of state legislation on financial abuse, the Committee met with the State Attorney's office, County police, and Department of Health and Human Services representatives. With our advocacy, the County set up a task force to deal with adult abuse and financial exploitation.

Federal-Level Activities. The Commission sent letters to Congress in support of renewal of the Older Americans Act and on the Appropriations Bill, in particular calling for the inclusion of \$25 million to fund activities under the Elder Justice Act.



Commission on Aging Legislative Breakfast

Stakeholder Forum Task Force: Caregiving Forum

The Task Force held a Stakeholder Forum on Family Caregiving February 28, 2014, at the Silver Spring Civic Center. Members of the public were invited to participate, which allowed attendees to hear real-life stories about the challenges of being a family caregiver, services that are needed, and how current services could be delivered more efficiently. In addition, the Forum provided an opportunity for caregivers to learn about currently available services.

With assistance from government agencies, non-profit organizations, and religious groups, 105 individuals attended; of those, 77 were members of the public, including 43 who identified themselves as family caregivers.

The Forum was moderated by Elinor Ginzler, a nationally recognized expert in Family Caregiving, and included eight experts representing key areas of needed services in Family Caregiving: respite care, support groups, senior centers, county services, transportation, nutrition, adult day care, and mental health. The program allowed family caregivers to ask questions and raise issues about their personal situations; experts were able to respond and offer possible solutions.

The Task Force Final Report lists the following recommended actions:

1. Coordination/organization/leadership of family caregiving services in the public, private, and voluntary sectors by a County entity,
2. Clarification and centralization of information in multiple languages
3. Improved availability of respite care services,
4. Power of attorney consistency, and
5. Availability of mental health services information.

The recommendations also include further study and research of caregiving models across the Country through a COA Summer Study, sharing of the Final Report with County officials who can influence implementation of recommended actions, and a COA request for the County Council's support for a proposed County Caregiving Senior Fellow position.

2014 Summer Studies Work Groups

Exploration of Best Practices and Approach Models To Support Family Caregivers for Older Adults

Many Montgomery County residents are family caregivers for older adults. During the Stakeholder Forum in February 2014, more than 120 Montgomery County residents who are caregivers shared their greatest support need with the Commission: a single point of contact/centralized information source to address caregiver concerns and to provide critical information to caregivers.

The purpose of the study was to explore caregiver support models across the Country. This study was designed to enable COA to make a possible recommendation about creating a new position, a Caregiver Coordinator, and/or a Caregiver Coalition or some other model in order to provide improved support to the County's resident caregivers and those for whom they care.

Representatives from the Maryland Caregivers Support Coordinating Council, Takoma Park at Home, Montgomery County, Alzheimers Association, AARP, N4A, National Alliance for Caregiving, National Council on Aging, American Society on Aging, National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, Villages researchers, transportation advocates, housing advocates, hospitals, and care providers attended three meetings during the summer. Participants identified organizations and institutions using new or innovative best-practices or evidence-based approaches to caregiver support. They developed a brief survey, contacted the identified entities to learn more about their programs, and presented their findings to the group.

Recommendations from the Study were:

1. A Caregiver Coordinator position would greatly benefit County residents who are caregivers by providing a single point of access to information;
2. The County also may benefit from increased partnership with the Alzheimers Association,

which has an extensive, multi-lingual, multi-platform caregiver support program that includes, web, phone, in-person, one-on-one, and multi-lingual approaches.

To read the full report of this Summer Study, visit the Commission on Aging's website at: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAindex.html

The Need to Improve Advocacy for Older Adults In Montgomery County Planning

This Summer Study arose from concerns that despite the increasing number of older adults in the County, they lack adequate visibility and representation in the County's planning process when the County's Master Plans and Sectors are being developed. In approving this Summer Study, the COA also recognized the need for the County to continue to implement its *Senior Agenda* and *Community for a Lifetime* goals.

The three-session Summer Study investigated the roles of the County Planning Department and Boards, Executive Departments, the County Council, developers, the public, and the COA in addressing senior concerns in planning. Kenneth Hartman, Director of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Service Center, served as an independent moderator to facilitate the three discussions. Prior to each session, speakers held a conference call to define parameters for discussion. Outcome from these discussions led the Summer Study group to develop the series of recommendations, below, for COA approval.

In September 2014, the COA approved the following Summer Study recommendations:

1. The COA should advocate for inclusion of a "Senior" section in all Master Plans and Sector Plans.
2. The COA should expand the *Senior Agenda*, using resources cited in the full Summer Study report such as the World Organization (WHO)

Checklist of Essential Features of Age Friendly Cities and other resources. This would ensure comprehensive coverage of all the key features of an Age Friendly County and will guide the County Council, County departments, planners, developers, and advocates in making the County a more livable community for older adults.

3. The COA should recommend that a high-level staff position be created on the County Planning Board to advocate and promote senior issues.
4. The COA should recommend that the County Executive and the County Council coordinate to have a representative from the Planning Board on the Senior Subcabinet, engaging fully as a member with County department heads.
5. The COA should provide leadership and strong advocacy for older adults in the planning process by building relationships and strategic partnerships with the government, for-profit, and non-profits sectors.
6. The COA encourages investigating the possibility of Montgomery County becoming a WHO Age Friendly City (County) because it uses a comprehensive approach to ensure that the needs of older adults and everyone else in the community are met. Therefore, COA should advocate with the County Executive/ Council that a task group be formed to explore the steps and resources involved in Montgomery County joining the WHO Age Friendly Cities program.

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www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAindex.html

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Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive

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