

Montgomery County, Maryland Commission on Aging 2018 Annual Report



Montgomery County, Maryland
Department of Health and Human Services





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Letter from the Chair of the Commission on Aging

March 2019

The Honorable Marc Elrich
The Honorable Nancy Navarro

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging is pleased to provide its Annual Report for 2018. The Report describes the key activities of the Commission as an advisor to County Officials and as the Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging as mandated by the Older Americans Act. The Commission also serves as an advocate for the interests and concerns of the County's older adults and their families.

In 2018, the Commission continued to monitor the County's progress in achieving the goals and vision of the "Senior Agenda: A Community for a Lifetime." We provided oral and written testimony to the Council and had meetings with individual Councilmembers regarding Commission priorities. Many of the Commission's budget priorities were included in the FY19 County Operating Budget. We were honored to have County Executive Leggett, both of you, and then Council President Riemer speak at Commission meetings. We thank the County Executive and County Council for their initiatives and continuing support of older adults.

The Commission's significant activities in 2018 included:

March 2018 Public Forum on "Age-Friendly Montgomery" in the Silver Spring Civic Building, which attracted more than 100 attendees. This was a follow-up to the 2017 Public Forum and addressed four Age-Friendly Montgomery domains: Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation, Employment, Public Safety, Civic and Social Engagement. On this occasion, COA presented then County Executive Ike Leggett with a booklet the Commission developed, describing the County's accomplishments on behalf of the older adults during his 12-year tenure.

June 2018 program, Challenges facing Older Adults in the County's Diverse Communities, which featured a panel of representatives from several of these communities. They discussed the key challenges that older adults in their community face. As a result of what we learned at this program, the Commission identified priorities for the County's FY20 budget related to support for diverse communities.

Many Commissioners spent the summer months and early fall in developing and publishing a "Commission on Aging Briefing Book" for elected officials and other stakeholders. The Briefing Book's objective was to inform recipients of the major issues that impact older adult residents and their families. These issues are: Affordable Housing; Assisted Living Affordability; Caregiver Support; Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation; Health and Social Services; Quality in Long Term Care Facilities; Social Isolation; and Transportation, Driver Safety and Pedestrian Safety. In addition, the Briefing Book addressed three cross-cutting topics: Communications, Diversity, and Ageism.

The Commission's Aging in Community Committee and Health and Wellness Committee and special Task Groups explored topics with invited experts to gain additional knowledge so as to identify what areas should be further investigated and/or recommended for Commission action and advocacy. The Public Policy Committee monitored relevant County and State bills and sent letters of support as appropriate.

We could not have accomplished all that we have without the support of County staff. In this regard, we express our deep appreciation to former Department of Health Human Services Director Uma Ahluwalia and former Aging and Disability Services Chief Dr. Jay Kenney who consistently provided outstanding support and guidance to the Commission over many years. It is with great respect and admiration that we acknowledge the wise counsel and support of Dr. Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging (AAA). The following AAA staff provided outstanding assistance to the Commission: Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator; Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator; Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Manager; Lylie Fisher, Caregiver Coordinator; Tina Pursler-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator; Erin Smith, Program Data Manager; and Dennis Linders, County Stats. Their contributions are invaluable to the Commission and to the well-being of all older adults in the County.

Finally, and importantly, we extend our congratulations and welcome to you, Marc Elrich as the County's new County Executive, and you, Nancy Navarro as Council President. The Commission looks forward to engaging with you on matters that significantly affect the quality of life of the County's older adult residents and their families.

Respectfully,



Isabelle Schoenfeld, Chair



Commission Officers

Isabelle Schoenfeld, Chair
Stephanie Edelstein ViceChair
Syed Yusuf, Budget and Finance Advisor
Amoke Alakoye, Secretary

Committee and Task Group Chairs

Aging in Community Committee: Noelle Heyman and Richard Jourdenais
Communications and Community Outreach Committee: Vacant
Health and Wellness Committee: Neal Brown and Alan Kaplan
Public Policy Committee: Mort Faller and T. Ryan Wilson
Ageism Task Group: Hillery Tsumba
COA Briefing Book Task Group: Amy Harbison and Marsha Weber
Diversity Panel Program Task Group: Revathi Vikram
2018 Public Forum Task Group: Amoke Alakoye

Commission Members

Amoke Alakoye	Amy Harbison	Ruby Moone	Isabelle Schoenfeld
Neal Brown	Noelle Heyman	Jerry Morenoff	Tho Tran
Barbara Brubeck	Richard Jourdenais	Mary Petrizzo	Hillery Tsumba
Nguyen Minh Chau	Alan Kaplan	Phyllis Rand	Revathi Vikram
Jean Dinwiddie	Miriam Keltly	Philip Rider	Marsha Weber
Stephanie Edelstein	Rashid Makhdoom	Beverly Rollins	T. Ryan Wilson
Morton Faller	Karen Maricheau	Deborah Royster	Syed Yusuf
Georgia S. Guenther	Nanine Meiklejohn	Monica Schaeffer	

Liaisons to Commission on Aging

Age Friendly Montgomery: Marcia Pruzan
Aging and Disability Services: Dr. John (Jay) Kenney and Acting Chief, Dr. Odile Brunetto
Commission on Aging Alumni: Irwin Goldbloom and Pat Lesnick
Commission on People with Disabilities: Seth Morgan
Commission on Veterans Affairs: James Campbell
Department of Housing and Community Affairs: Leslie Marks
Department of Recreation: Jeffrey Bourne and Phil Smakula
Department of Transportation: Denise Isreal
Ethnic Affairs Committee: Pat Lesnick
Housing Opportunities Commission: Stephanie Moore
Montgomery County Parks and Planning: Pamela Zorich
Montgomery County Police Department: Morton Davis
Office Of Community Partnerships: Austin Heyman
State’s Attorney’s Office: Kelly Davis and Debbie Feinstein

Aging and Disabilities Services/DHHS Liaisons to COA

Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging
Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator
Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Program Manager
Lylie Fisher, Caregiver Coordinator
Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator
Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator
Erin K. Smith, Program Data Manager



Enabling Legislation

The Commission on Aging was established by Montgomery County in 1974 pursuant to a requirement of the federal Older Americans Act of 1965, that there be an Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging. (42 U.S. Sec. 3001 et. seq.; MC Code Article III, Sec. 27-34.)

In creating the Commission, the Council declared:

It is hereby declared to be the public policy of the county to promote and initiate programs to improve conditions of the aging or elderly in the county; to work toward elimination of restrictions which impede older citizens from full participation in the mainstream of community life; and to assist and stimulate all levels of government and the community to be more responsive to the needs of the county's older citizens.

Among the powers granted to the Commission are the following:

- (f) To study and investigate by means of public or private meetings, conferences and public hearings, conditions which may result in unmet needs or discrimination or prejudice because of age.
- (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.
- (h) To work to remove the unmet needs of discrimination or prejudice on the basis of age in such areas as housing, recreation, employment, education, community services and related matters. (MC Code Article III, Sec. 27-34).

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.

In 2017, in consultation with the County Attorney, the Commission adopted revised Bylaws. ■

Area Agency on Aging

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is responsible for the provision of a continuum of home and community-based services to the County's older adults and families. The AAA 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 is part of a national network of over 670 AAAs established under the OAA to improve the quality of life for older persons. The AAA's are mandated to "foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems to serve older individuals..."

Highlights of AAA Activities in Fiscal Year 2018:

- Staff from the Aging and Disability Services (ADRU) a Maryland Access Point, answered 21,207 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 non-profit partners.
- The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program conducted more than 4,041 visits to long-term care facilities, provided 3,310 information and consultations with individuals, 1,690 consultations with providers, investigated 409 formal complaints and opened 226 cases. The program has dedicated volunteer corps of 50 state certified individuals serving 227 facilities.
- The Public Guardianship program served 110 persons in need of protective services as determined by the courts, conducting more than 1,046 face-to-face contacts with these clients. Additionally, the program conducted nine education and training events for more than 200 participants. The Public Guardianship Program helped residents avoid 50 cases due to preventative assessments and education.
- The Senior Nutrition Program served 5,930 clients and provided more than 437,793 meals, both in congregate sites and through home-delivered meals.
- The AAA via contracts with the Mobile Dentist, provided dental care and dentures to 108 seniors lacking insurance.
- The Nurses team conducted 3,324 Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) evaluations, which are mandated to enable eligible persons to receive community-based, long-term Medicaid-funded services.
- The AAA currently provides nurse monitoring services (via its contract partners) to over 2,600 Community First Choice Program participants. The AAA Supports Planning Agency serve 320 Community First Choice clients.
- The Health and Wellness program served 600 individuals through health screening sessions and 1,100 individuals through health education sessions which include our new Medication Management Program, Homemeds. The Health and Wellness program also organized physical fitness and exercise sessions through classes such "Bone Builders," "Matter of Balance and our new "Stepping On" program. Over 2,000 county residents were served.
- The Mobility and Transportation Manager has used federal funds to promote volunteer drivers programs and other transportation options in the County, including Ride-On Buses, Connect-a-Ride, and Escorted Transportation.
- The Village Coordinator has helped to start or expand approximately 34 villages in the County.
- The Caregiver Support Coordinator has facilitated an Action Group for the County's Dementia Friendly Initiative in partnership with the Bright Focus Foundation, the Alzheimer's Association and other numerous partners.
- The Senior Fellow for "Age Friendly Montgomery" facilitated the submission of the Montgomery County three-year strategic plan (FY17, 18, 19) to the World Health Organization/AARP Age Friendly Communities Initiative.
- The Caregiver Support Manager and the Village Coordinator worked with the National Hispanic Council on Aging, TESS Center, and the Community Action Agency to host a two-day workshop for Spanish-speaking community leaders. It was followed up by a caregiver conference for the



Commission on Aging Activities

Older Adults in Montgomery County

The Commission's work is ever more significant as our senior population continues to grow and to become more diverse. Seniors are the fastest growing age group in the County. Between 2015 and 2040, the Montgomery County older adult population (age 60+) is projected to increase by 53%, from 205,841 to 315,666. Life expectancy is also increasing, with the population of older adults age 85+ expected to increase by approximately 39% between 2015 and 2030.

The older adult population of Montgomery County is also growing more diverse. Approximately 14% of residents age 60 and older are Asian; 13% are Black or African American; and 8% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 38% of County residents age 60+, the majority of whom are women, live alone.

The County is also home to significant numbers of low and moderate income elders: 18% of households headed by an individual age 65+ have income less than \$20,000 per year. Housing costs are an issue, particularly for renters. For 25% of senior homeowners, housing costs exceed 30% of their income; 51% of senior renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent. In 2015, 23% of seniors living in the community reported having at least one limitation in performing activities of daily living. Many may require case management, transportation, in-home assistance, dental services, congregate and home-delivered meals, or other services. Respite care is often needed when the senior lives with a caregiver.

COA Organization and Core Activities

Commission activities include the following: monthly meetings of the full Commission, the Executive Committee, and the following four standing committees: Aging in Community, Communications and Community Outreach, Health and Wellness, and Public Policy. The standing committees explore topics and issues within their scope and identify challenges and gaps in services and supports. The issues are presented to the full Commission for consideration for further action, e.g., inclusion as a budget priority, or advocacy at the County or State level. COA also engages in concentrated study of certain issues, e.g., affordable housing, quality of care in nursing homes. The Public Policy Committee focuses on budget and legislative advocacy. Task Groups are created as needed to examine discrete issues, e.g., ageism, diversity. COA also co-produces the monthly County Cable Montgomery program, *Seniors Today*, which informs the community about issues, programs, and activities for older adults.

All COA meetings are open to the public. To help inform the Commission's priorities and advocacy, full Commission and Committee meetings frequently include invited guests who share their expertise on relevant topics. Meetings are often attended by representatives from other Montgomery County Commissions, Boards, Committees, Departments, and Agencies, and other stakeholders. Several Commissioners serve as liaisons to other relevant organizations and groups. Commissioners meet with the County Executive, County Councilmembers, Department Directors and staff, State legislators, members of the public, and others in order to advance programs, services, and policies on behalf of County seniors.

At the County level, COA provides oral and written testimony on legislative, budget, and program issues and priorities before the County Council; meets with members of the Council and Executive branch Directors; has ongoing communication with department staff; and collaborates with other County Boards, Committees, Commissions, and stakeholders on issues of mutual interest. In addition to interacting with county government entities, COA engages with non-profit partners and private sector groups to identify challenges and develop solutions.

At the State level, COA responds to proposed legislation in the General Assembly and communicates with relevant State agencies and members of the Montgomery County Delegation on issues of concern to older adults in the County. Commissioners also testify at hearings.

At the Federal level, COA writes letters on priority issues to our Congressional representatives and/or supports Congressional/Executive Branch outreach conducted by national organizations who represent our older adult population.



Commission on Aging Activities

Key COA Advocacy Activities in Recent Years

The Commission believes that Montgomery County continues to make progress towards becoming a Community for a Lifetime as envisioned by the Senior Agenda, which was developed by the Commission, and endorsed by the County Executive and the County Council in 2012. In keeping with the vision and goals of the Senior Agenda, the Commission continues to focus on quality of life issues for all older adults in the County.

County Level– COA budget advocacy has resulted in additional funding for essential County supports and services for vulnerable older adults, including services that are mandated under federal and/or state law but that require supplemental County funding to meet the need. Some of the programs and services receiving those funds include the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Adult Protective Services, Public Guardianship, Adult Foster Care, Respite Care, Senior Centers, and Transportation.

State Level – COA has supported a number of successful state legislative initiatives, *e.g.*, requiring banks, credit unions and most recently financial advisors to report suspected elder abuse; requiring hospitals to provide a patient or patient’s legal guardian with the opportunity to designate a caregiver to receive notice of the patient’s discharge and giving that caregiver information about the patient’s aftercare needs; allowing the Maryland Attorney General to file civil actions to recover damages on behalf of elder financial abuse victims; reducing property tax burdens on older homeowners; establishing a telephone reassurance program for older adults; and examining the quality of care in nursing homes.

In 2016, COA worked with the Maryland Dental Action Coalition to support SB169/HB1158, which provided for a study of the impact of dental emergencies on emergency room costs and authorized the Governor to establish an adult dental benefit in the Medicaid (Maryland Medical Assistance) program. The Health and Wellness Committee provided talking points for testimony and letters of support for the successful bills. A pilot program to offer such a benefit will commence in 2019.

Innovative Programming – The Commission has successfully advocated for the creation of innovative programs and services for older adults and new positions to support them, including a Transportation and Mobility Manager, a Village Coordinator, a Caregiver Support Coordinator, and a Senior Fellow to manage the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Initiative. Other innovative programs recently instituted with COA support include the Senior Center Plus Program for older adults with some cognitive impairments, and a partnership between Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide home health and other services to 911 “frequent callers.”

Age Friendly Montgomery County – As a result of the Commission on Aging’s research and advocacy, in 2015 County Executive Isiah (Ike) Leggett accepted an invitation from the World Health Organization (WHO) to enroll in WHO’s international network of certified Age-Friendly Communities. The County now enjoys the status of a WHO designated Age-Friendly Community, under an initiative known as Age-Friendly Montgomery County (AFMC). AFMC adapted the WHO domains essential to an Age-Friendly community. The County Executive established an AFMC Advisory Group (comprised of Department Directors and external representatives) and ten Age-Friendly Workgroups who bring together public and private sector participants to identify and develop strategies to address issues in each of the domains. COA actively supports the AFMC effort. The COA Chair serves on the Advisory Group and COA members serve on the Workgroups. AFMC information is at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/age-friendly.html. WHO/AARP granted a three-year extension to AFMC’s certification based on accomplishments to date. This was announced at COA’s 2018 PublicForum.



Commission on Aging Activities

COA Public Forum

Public Forums are planned by COA as education and advocacy opportunities as well as opportunities to hear from the public. In addition to COA members, attendees include County residents; representatives from local non-profits; businesses; home health agencies and healthcare providers; County government staff who serve the older adult population; and other interested stakeholders.

The goals of the 2017 and 2018 Public Forums were to:

1. Educate participants about the WHO/AARP Age Friendly Montgomery County initiative and its impact on the community.
2. Inform attendees of AFMC progress to made to date.
3. Seek feedback from attendees.
4. Develop recommendations to inform ongoing work on the AFMC initiative.

The 2017 Public Forum provided information on progress to date on the AFMC initiative and obtained feedback from more than 120 attendees about their top issues and concerns relative to four Age-Friendly domains: Housing, Transportation, Communications, and Home and Community Based Services.

The 2018 Public Forum continued the discussion by focusing on four additional AFMC domains: Senior Public Safety, Employment, Elder Abuse Prevention, and Civic and Social Involvement. More than 110 attendees participated in the Forum and brought their interest, personal experience and/or expertise to the discussions. Breakout groups for each of the domains were followed by a closing Plenary where attendees heard recommendations identified in each of the breakout groups and provided their input and feedback. This discussion resulted in the following recommendations for further action by AFMC:

Senior Public Safety

1. Develop a long-term plan for public safety of older adults using the domains in the Age-Friendly framework as a guide.
2. Explore partnerships with like-minded organizations, county agencies, and service providers across AFMC domains to increase awareness of Senior Public Safety concerns, to help generate new ideas and to fund programs that support and protect older and more vulnerable residents in Montgomery County.

Elder Abuse Prevention

1. Consider increased funding for Adult Protective Services and the State's Attorney's Office to support the needs of increasing numbers of abused and neglected adults in the county and their complex needs.
2. Identify opportunities to increase public awareness of elder abuse and neglect and the programs and services available to provide assistance.
3. Gather decision makers from county agencies to determine a process for coordinating information sharing when reviewing case files.



Commission on Aging Activities

Employment

1. Develop and enhance partnerships to help increase awareness among older job seekers of the support and resources available from the county and its partners.
2. Work with partners to develop and make available additional programs to help older job seekers enhance their skills, knowledge, and use of information technology.

Civic and Social Involvement

1. Identify ways to increase volunteer opportunities for older adults that help them maintain social, physical and mental engagement.
2. Improve opportunities for older adults to obtain support accessing and using new technologies that will enhance their lives.

These recommendations were shared with the AFMC Advisory Group and Workgroups, the County Executive, the County Council, all participants, and the public via COA and AFMC's websites. The 2018 Public Forum Report is available on the COA website.

Honoring the County Executive

In addition to the Public Forum's AFMC focus, the COA took the opportunity to present former County Executive Ike Leggett with a booklet describing many of his numerous accomplishments on behalf of older adults and their families during his 12-year tenure as County Executive.

The booklet, "County Executive Accomplishments on Behalf of Older Adults," is available at

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CEAccomplishmentsSeniors.pdf



Former COA Chair Elaine Binder; Noelle Heyman; former County Executive Isaiah Leggett; Outgoing COA Chair Isabelle Schoenfeld; former COA Chair Judith Levy; Judith Welles and Irwin Goldbloom

Diversity Panel Program

On June 28, 2018, the Commission had as our monthly meeting a special program "A Panel Discussion of Older Adults from Diverse Communities." The objective of the program was to learn from representatives from diverse communities about the major issues/challenges facing older adults in their communities and to learn from other leaders of diverse community groups representing older adults to share their successful experiences and lessons learned.

The representatives from diverse groups were: Amoke Alakoye (African American community); Dr. Anna Maria Izquierdo Poreera (Salvadoran community); Ms. Rebecca Martin (Ethiopian community); Jessica Sol (Korean community); and Tho Tran (Vietnamese community).

The invited speakers who discussed the successful activities on behalf of older adults in their communities were: Mona Negm, American Muslim Senior Society; Vivien Hsueh, Chinese American Senior Services Association. The panel discussion was facilitated by Bruce Adams, Director, Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships. Based on the panel discussion, the following recommendations were identified for COA advocacy:



COA Advocating on County and State Level

- A new Senior Fellow position dedicated to issues among diverse older adults, should be created.
- A collaborative coalition of organizations representing older adults in diverse communities should be established.
- Translations of County materials with the involvement of community groups.
- Communication of county programs, services, and supports through ethnic radio and TV stations.

COA Briefing Book

In anticipation of the turnover in County and State elected officials, Department Directors, and other Stakeholders, the Commission developed a “Briefing Book.” The COA Briefing Book highlights the Commission’s mission, key activities and accomplishments, and, importantly, describes the major Issues that we believe continue to be quality of life challenges for our County’s older adults and their families. The Issues that were presented in the Briefing Book are: Affordable Housing; Assisted Living Affordability; Caregivers Support; Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation; Health and Social Services; Quality of Long Term Care Facilities; Social Isolation; and Transportation. These Issues are expected to continue to expand as the older adult population grows, and they require near-term as well as long-term plans to address the challenges. In addition to the Issues, a few topics were included that are termed “Cross-Cutting Topics.” They are Diversity, Communications, and Ageism -- topics that can have a significant impact on most of the Issues in the Briefing Book.

COA Speakers in 2018

In addition to speakers noted in other sections of this report, the COA heard from a number of presenters at full Commission meetings, including: Jeff Goldman, Vice President, Primary Care Coalition; Mario Wawrzusin, Manager, Adult Protective Services and Public Guardianship, DHHS; Eileen Bennett, Manager, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, DHHS; Clarence Snuggs, Director, DHCA; and Charles Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive. We were also honored to welcome as speakers: County Executive Ike Leggett, County Council Chair Hans Riemer, and Council Chair Elect Nancy Navarro. At COA’s June meeting, as part of the priority settings process, Commission members heard from County staff about their initiatives, and issues of concern. This information was used to inform the development of COA priorities for 2019 and FY20 County Budget.

Public Advocacy

County

The Commission’s 2018 activities and priorities, including budget priorities for FY20, were informed by the goals and recommendations from a variety of sources including: the Senior Agenda; AFMC strategic goals; 2017 and 2018 Public Forums; the 2017 summer study “Preserving and Enhancing Affordable Rental Housing in Montgomery County and its Impact on Older Adults;” the June 2018 COA Diversity Program panel described below; and COA Committees’ exploration of focus topics. The COA’s overarching priorities for 2018 (including for the FY19 County budget) were preserving and expanding affordable housing for seniors and maintaining services for vulnerable older adults in light of anticipated deep cuts to federal safety net programs.

The Commission recognizes and appreciates the efforts of the County Council to respond to the needs of older adults in the County, including those who are low– income and/or otherwise vulnerable, and those who are healthier and more vital. Our advocacy included written and oral testimony at Council Committee meetings and



COA Advocating on County and State Level

In April 2018, following release of the County Executive’s proposed FY19 budget, Commission members met with County Councilmembers to discuss that proposal and to advocate for additional COA budget priorities. The FY19 budget approved by the Council included all or some resources for items 1,2 and 4, above. Those items that were not funded were taken into consideration in our priority deliberations for the FY20 budget.

The COA’s overarching priorities for the FY19 County budget were (1) preserving and expanding affordable housing for seniors, and (2) maintaining services for vulnerable seniors in light of anticipated deep cuts to federal safety net programs. Our specific budget priorities were provided to the County Executive, the Office of Management and Budget, and the County Council. They included:

1. Preserve and Expand Affordable Rental Housing Options: Increase the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) to ensure that its balance is at least \$50 million at the beginning of FY19.
2. Long Term Care Ombudsman Program: Add one full-time Ombudsman Position.
3. Public Guardianship Program: Add one full-time Social Worker Position.
4. Senior Center Plus/Early State Memory Loss Program.
5. Respite Care: Funding to Support Minimum Wage Increase for Direct Care Staff.
6. State’s Attorney’s Office: Add one full-time Fraud Investigator Position.

The Commission engaged in other advocacy on behalf of older adults in the County, including on the issues of affordable housing and accessible transportation.

Affordable Housing

The demand for affordable housing for older adults is increasing as our older adult population is growing. The COA continues to prioritize the need for more affordable housing options for older adults, protections for older renters, and programs and services to address senior homelessness. Our 2017 Summer Study “Preserving and Expanding Affordable Rental Housing in Montgomery County and its Impact on Seniors,” includes several recommendations for policy, operations and education/advocacy action. In 2017 and again in 2018, we urged the County Council to ensure that long- range planning, including innovative solutions for affordable housing, is undertaken for both older adult owned housing and rental housing to ensure a range of safe, affordable housing alternatives.

In 2017, COA expressed concern that the Planning Department Montgomery County Rental Housing Study” released in June of that year did not give adequate coverage to issues confronting older adult renters. We were pleased that our concerns were heard and a follow-up study, “Meeting the Housing Needs of Older Adults in Montgomery County,” was undertaken. The study was published in May 2018. COA will monitor implementation of the recommendations from this study and will use its findings and recommendations to help to inform our priorities going forward.

Another recommendation from the 2017 Summer Study provided the impetus for the Commission’s successful advocacy for an increase in the County’s HIF, described above. In 2019, we will begin to explore how the HIF is used to support affordable housing options for older adults.

A third recommendation from the Summer Study– to examine ways in which the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program could better serve Montgomery County– was a topic at our 2017 Legislative Breakfast and additional study in 2018. It will be a focus of the COA’s 2019 advocacy activity to the state legislature. This issue is also included in the Montgomery County Delegation’s 2019 legislative priorities.



COA Advocating on County and State Level

Accessible Transportation – The Transportation Services Fund (TSIF)

COA worked closely with the Commission on Persons with Disabilities to support appropriate use by the County of the TSIF. This fund, generated from assessments on UBER and Lyft rides, was created to improve the delivery of “accessible transportation services, transportation for eligible senior citizens, and transportation for persons with limited income.”

COA testified before the Council and participated in other meetings with TSIF stakeholders, Councilmembers, and agency representatives, to ensure that the fund is used for the purpose for which it was intended going forward. COA and other stakeholders are also engaged with the Department of Transportation to ensure that the regulations associated with the TSIF provide the appropriate incentives for making vehicles accessible.

State

The Public Policy Committee reviewed more than four dozen bills filed in the Maryland General Assembly during the 2018 session that were of interest to Montgomery County seniors. The Committee researched relevant topics, including protection for vulnerable adults and affordable housing, and led the drafting of position letters.

The following bills supported by the COA were enacted into law:

- SB 4 to establish an oversight committee on quality of care in nursing homes.
- SB 386 to set time frames for OHCQ to investigate serious nursing home and assisted living complaints.
- HB 556 to allow the Register of Wills to waive probate fees for low-income heirs when all that is involved is real property.
- HB 1465 to protect homeowners from having house sold at tax sale if taxes owed are \$750 or less, and to provide other protections including notification of legal help and tax credit programs.

The following bills supported by the COA were not successful:

- SB 427 to change the residency requirement for seniors to get local property tax credit from 40 years owning the home to 25 years in the county (not necessarily in the same home).
- SB 547 to allow state elections by mail.
- HB 956 to allow attorneys’ fees and treble damages in civil actions by elder abuse victims against perpetrator.
- HB 995 to allow Montgomery County to enact a just cause eviction law.

We continue to monitor the Task Force on Long-Term Care Education and Planning, the creation of which was supported by the County’s State Delegation and which aims to provide Marylanders under the age of 50 with the tools needed to understand how to plan and pay for long-term care. We are in full support of the value of this information to our residents.

Legislative Breakfast

- *The Legislative breakfast* for members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the General Assembly is an opportunity for COA to inform Delegation members about COA’s work and to share COA priorities; for COA to learn about Delegation members’ plans and priorities for the upcoming legislative session; and for all participants to identify areas for working together for the benefit of older adults in the County.

Due to a series of scheduling conflicts (including orientations for newly elected legislators and legislative breakfasts sponsored by other groups) COA deferred this year’s meeting to a date in 2019. However, all members of the County Delegation received written materials from COA including the Briefing Book described above and a description of COA priorities.



Commission on Aging Committees and Groups

Standing Committee Activities

A substantial amount of Commission activity occurs in its Standing Committees, which provide the opportunity for members and guests to focus in greater depth on specific issues, to develop projects, and to identify potential priorities. Those committees are Aging in Community (AIC), Communications and Community Outreach (CCO), Health and Wellness (H&W), and Public Policy (PP).

Aging in Community Committee

During the 2018, this Committee focused on an exploration of affordable housing for older adults and inter-generational and multigenerational living. As a follow-up to COA's Summer Study on "Preserving and Expanding Affordable Rental Housing in Montgomery County and its Impact on Seniors," Linda Macmillan, County Council Senior Legislative Analyst, discussed the Planning Department's RKG Rental Housing Study findings and Timothy Goetzinger, Chief, Division of Finance and Administration, DHCA discussed the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) providing detailed information on its income sources and uses. Details were also provided about the Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) program. A representative from Habit for Humanity discussed accessory dwelling units.

On the subject of intergenerational and multigenerational living, Leah Bradley, Assistant Director, JCS Heyman InterAges Center, described intentionally scheduled activities in Montgomery County in which seniors and school-age children meet and share experiences. Dr. Emi Kiyota, President, Ibasho Organization, described programs in Japan, the Philippines and Nepal where seniors are empowered to use their life experience to create and maintain living communities for all generations.

After the summer break, the Committee continued to inquire about how to increase the number of accessory dwelling units in the County and to gather additional information regarding existing intergenerational and multi-generational living in the County.

Another topic the committee began to explore was Food Insecurity. Dennis Linders, Manager, Planning, Accountability, and Customer Services, DHHS presented statistics from a recent Montgomery County Food Council report entitled "Aging and Vulnerability Outreach". In the U.S., about 5.5 million (7.7%) seniors (>60 yrs.) are food insecure. The Committee was also briefed by: Melanie Polk, Montgomery County HHS Director, Senior Nutrition Program; Diana Tato-Niktash, Montgomery County HHS Program Manager, Food Security Plan; Heather Bruskin, Executive Director, Montgomery County Food Council; and Jenna Umbriac, Director of Programs and Policy, MANNA Food Center.

Aging in Community members also served on Age-Friendly Montgomery Workgroups.

Communications and Community Outreach Committee

While the Committee did not conduct formal meetings due to co-chair vacancies, COA members interested in communications issues were involved in other COA activities described in this report, including production of the Briefing Book, the Ageism Task Group, and Seniors Today. The Committee is being revitalized in 2019.

Ageism Task Group

A Task Group was established to examine how ageism manifests in Montgomery County in areas ranging from communications and civic and social engagement to employment and economic development. The workgroup convened two study sessions during which interested COA members and other guest delved deeper into this issue. The work of this Task Group will be continuing in the Communications and Community Outreach Committee in 2019.



Commission on Aging Committees and Groups

Seniors Today Task Force

The Commission co-produces the monthly Montgomery County Cable show, *Seniors Today*, which continues to present relevant and entertaining programming. *Seniors Today* airs several times a month and is also available at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccm/seniorstoday.html. The program is hosted by Austin Heyman, Senior Fellow Office of Community Partnerships.

This year, guest included: Rona Kramer, Maryland Secretary of Aging; Isiah Leggett, County Executive; Hans Riemer, Council President; David Gamse, Chief Executive Officer, JCA; Isabelle Schoenfeld, COA Chair; John McCarthy, Montgomery County State's Attorney; Tovah Kaslin, Director, ElderSAFE; Pazit Aviv, Montgomery County Village Coordinator; Shawn Brennan Montgomery County Transportation and Mobility Manager; Tina Purser-Langley, Montgomery County Health and Wellness Coordinator; Chih-Hsiang Li and Sharyn Duffin, Path of Achievement Award Winners; and Javaneh Pourkarim, Staff Attorney, Maryland Legal Aid Montgomery County Office.

Health and Wellness Committee

During 2018, this Committee explored a number of issues affecting older adults in the County. Most meetings featured guest experts. Eileen Bennett, Program Manager, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, provided information on this program and the quality of nursing home care in the County. Ms. Bennett also made a presentation to the full Commission of this topic. To learn more about programs for persons with early dementia, the Committee invited Patty Hagan, Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA) and Pam Mills, Ingleside Memory Support, who discussed programs for persons with early state dementia, e.g. Senior Plus.

A key focus area for the Committee was the affordability and quality of assisted living facilities, especially, the "senior gap", i.e., seniors whose income and resources are above the Medicaid qualifying level, but not enough to afford assisted living or home care. Invited speakers included: Lisa Peet, from Montgomery County Assisted Living Group Home Subsidy Program (SALGHS); Peter Flandrau and Rita Deng, HHS, who discussed the Community First Choice Program as it relates to affordable, high quality, assisted living; and assisted living providers Joe Podson, residential One; Carol Cohen Wolfe, Homecrest; and Donna Tucker, Edwards House. The Committee also heard from Marsha Aaron and Erin Claxton who implemented the State's Senior Care Program in Montgomery County.

Public Policy Committee

The Public Policy Committee took the lead on much of the Commission's advocacy on priority issues at the county, state and federal levels, as discussed in more detail above under "Policy Advocacy." The Committee reviewed proposed legislation on the state, county, and federal levels; researched relevant topics as needed; drafted testimony and other written documents; and testified before the County Council. ■

Collaborations and Partnerships

The Commission continues to collaborate with other Boards, Committees, Commissions and Stakeholder groups. Several such entities send liaisons to Commission meetings, and some Commission members serve as liaisons to other Boards, Committees and Commissions. The Commission looks for opportunities to collaborate with other groups on common issues. For example, COA and the Commission on People with Disabilities work closely in addressing issues associated with the TSIF. In addition, most Commission members are active in groups supporting senior services.

Dementia Friendly America Initiative

In 2016, Montgomery County joined Dementia Friendly America, an emerging network of cities and states creating an informed, safe and respectful community for people and families impacted by dementia and other cognitive challenges. The County's strengthened services include a new program of collaboration among public safety officers to offer additional support to individuals experiencing cognitive challenges and their families. The Commission continues to collaborate with this initiative.

COA Plans for 2019

The Commission on Aging will undertake the following activities in 2019:

- Meet regularly in Standing Committee and as a full Commission to implement Commission goals and priorities.
- Revitalize the Communications and Community Outreach Committee.
- Engage newly elected officials and new department heads on issues described in the COA Briefing Book and other issues of importance to older adults in the County.
- Identify and examine one or more focus areas of importance to older adults in the County.
- Convene 2019 Public Forum in March 2019.
- Advocate on priority issues, including budget issues, at the County, State and Federal levels.
- Identify 2020 priorities and FY21 County Budget priorities.
- Host Legislative Breakfast in November 2019.
- Continue to participate in the AFMC Advisory Group and Workgroups and monitor implementation of the Age-Friendly strategic plan as appropriate.
- Monitor implementation of recommendations in the 2018 study, "Meeting the Housing Needs of Older Adults in Montgomery County," and advocate as needed.
- Monitor use of the Transportation Safety Improvement Fund (TSIF) and the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) as they impact older adults and advocate as needed.
- Attend HHS quarterly BCC meetings and prepare quarterly reports.
- Collaborate with other Boards, Committees, Commissions, and other groups as appropriate.
- Other activities as identified.



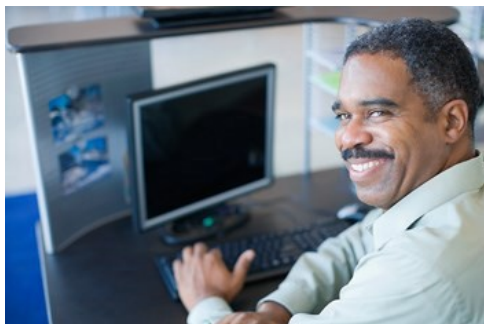
Isabelle Schoenfeld; Isiah Leggett; Austin Heyman and Council President Hans Riemer



Council Vice-President Nancy Navarro

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Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive

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