

# Commission on Aging Montgomery County, Maryland 2022 Annual Report



Austin Heyman accepting award from Chair Barbara Selter and Commissioner Wayne Berman



Sara Fought, JCA, accepting award from Commissioner Wayne Berman

## 2022 Community for a Lifetime Awards

**Exploring Montgomery County's Many Older Adult Programs and Services**

Montgomery County and its many community organizations offer a wealth of programs and services for older residents — both those who are active and healthy and those needing more support. As an older adult you may have questions about what services and supports are available such as:

- How do I sign up for Montgomery County's recreation and lifelong learning classes?
- Where can my family find help if we need access to food, transportation or housing?
- I'm caring for a family member at home. Are there resources to help me?
- Where's the nearest park where I can take a walk with my grandchild?
- I suspect a family member has been defrauded. What should I do?
- I want to volunteer. Where should I look?
- I am looking for information about local activities to enjoy.
- I want to help a family member stay safely at home.

There are programs to help with consumer issues, employment, health and wellness and recreation, safety, housing, caregiving, tax support, transportation, tech support, volunteering, COVID vaccination and testing, and much more.

Age-Friendly Montgomery County: A Community for a Lifetime  
Montgomery County, Maryland Commission on Aging  
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ceosr

**Commission on Aging  
Montgomery County, Maryland**

**Briefing Book  
2022**

February 15, 2022  
Senator Antonio L. Harro  
James Senate Office Building, Room 222  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Harro,

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging to express our very strong support for SB275 — The Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (aka Time to Care Act of 2022). Our concern is for family members who will need care for their loved ones during periods of recovery, rehabilitation, or longer term illness.

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging (COA) is authorized by the Older Americans Act, P.L. 86-151, and was established by Montgomery County in 1975 to advise County government on the needs, interests and issues of Older Adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state and national levels.

As the population of older adults continues to grow, throughout the State, it is essential that family members have the opportunity to take care of their loved ones without having to sacrifice their ability to have an income. Adult family members can give the special kind of support needed in order to provide critical care for their loved ones as a result of the provisions in this legislation. The Time to Care Act also enables older adults who need care to stay in their home or community longer, knowing that they are well taken care of and that reducing the extra institutional cost burden. Better care for a family member can help to reduce loneliness and social isolation that often happens when older adults are institutionalized for care. More importantly, the Time to Care Act will mean that family members do not have to choose between the job and taking care of their loved ones.

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging firmly believes that the passage of the Time to Care Act of 2022 is both necessary and timely. It will be an important step to ensuring the older adults in need are taken care of by the people that love them the most. We strongly support SB275.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,  
Barbara Selter, Chair  
Commission on Aging

Commission on Aging Fact Sheet, Briefing Book, and Advocacy Letter

**Department of Health and Human Services  
March 2023**

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## **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.C. 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 in 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 or 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 County Code requires that the Commission include at least 18 members appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. Members must be County residents, and a majority must be age 60 and older. Members are to 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, and representatives of major organizations or agencies concerned with aging.

## **Collaborations and Partnerships**

The Commission collaborates 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. In addition, most Commission members are active in other organizations supporting services for older adults.

## Letter from the Chair, Barbara Selter



**The Honorable Marc Elrich**  
**The Honorable Evan Glass**

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging is pleased to provide its Annual Report for 2022. 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 effective advocate for the interests and concerns of the County's older adults and their families.

In 2022, despite the continuing challenges presented by the global pandemic, 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 were honored to have then-Council Vice President Gabe Albornoz speak at a Commission meeting and we were pleased that some of the Commission's budget priorities were included in the FY23 County Operating Budget. We thank the County Executive and County Council for your initiatives and support of older adults.

The Commission's significant activities in 2022 included:

- Conducting a well-attended hybrid public forum, In Home Care: We Can Do Better
- Producing a Fact Sheet: Exploring Montgomery County's Many Older Adult Programs and Services. This was produced in collaboration with Age Friendly Montgomery and lists many important County services and resources.
- Hosting a virtual Legislative Breakfast for members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the State's General Assembly.
- Meeting individually through Zoom with members of the County Council to advocate for older adult programming and resources.
- Testifying twice before the County Council in support of the CoA's FY 23 budget priorities on issues affecting older adults.
- Continued the advocacy for the resolution of serious difficulties that the County faces due to the termination of a Memorandum of Understanding with the State that had enabled County staff to conduct surveys and investigations of County nursing facilities.
- Advocating for increased and improved home- and community-based services for older Americans under Medicaid, as well as older Americans who are not eligible for Medicaid, but who struggle to make ends meet.

- Presented the first Commission on Aging, Community for a Lifetime Awards at our Public Forum in May 2022. The awards went to Marcia Pruzan, Age Friendly Montgomery Coordinator, Carol Craig, Director, Montgomery County Senior Nutrition Program and Rhonda Brandes, Program Manager for the County Senior Nutrition Program. In December 2022, the CoA presented its second Community for a Lifetime Awards to Austin Heyman and to the Jewish Council on the Aging for their transportation Program.
- Updated the existing Commissioner Handbook and Briefing Book.
- Assisted with Identifying Programs for ARPA funding.
- Researched Key Issues and Wrote Advocacy Letters.
- Identified the Need for and Supported a Home and Community-Based Workforce Task Force.
- Established a Partnership with University of Maryland Shady Grove.
- Developed FY 2024 Budget Priorities.
- Established Outreach Programs to Improve Awareness of Resources for Older Adults.

While budget recommendations in 2022 focused on continuing to improve and enhance both current programs and new efforts, the Commission remains sensitive to economic issues affecting the County.

The Aging in Community and Health and Wellness Committees explored topics with invited experts to gain additional knowledge 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 including letters to the State Department of Health and the Department of Transportation on issues of concern to older citizens. The Communications Committee continued to host its public access cable program, 50+ in Montgomery County, and worked on an Ambassador's program and re-establishing older adult sections in Montgomery County Public Libraries to distribute materials of interest to older adults.

We could not have accomplished all that without the support of County staff. In this regard, we express our deep appreciation to DHHS Director Dr. Raymond Crowel. In addition, it is with great respect and admiration that we acknowledge the wise counsel and outstanding support and guidance of Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief of Montgomery County's Aging and Disability Services, and Dr. Patrice McGhee, Director of Montgomery County's Area Agency on Aging. The following AAA staff also provide outstanding assistance to the Commission: Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator; Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator; Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Manager; and Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator. Their contributions are invaluable to the Commission and to the well-being of all older adults in the County. The Commission looks forward to ongoing engagement with you on matters that significantly affect the quality of life of the County's older adult residents and their families.

Respectfully,

*Barbara Selter*

Barbara Selter, Chair



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**Commission Officers**

Barbara Selter, Chair  
Edgar Rivas, Vice Chair  
Kendell Matthews, Secretary  
David Engel, Budget and Finance Director

**Committee Chairs**

Aging in Community: Wayne Berman and Mary Sweeney  
Health and Wellness: Neal Brown and Marsha Weber  
Public Policy: Morris Klein and Ryan Wilson  
Communications: Jean Dinwiddie and Beverly Rollins

**Task Force Leaders**

Home and Community-Based Services Workforce Task Force: Barbara Selter and Edgar Rivas  
Public Forum Planning Sub-Committee:  
Jean Dinwiddie, Marsha Weber, and David Engel

**Commission Members**

Wayne Berman, Neal Brown, Virginia Cain, Elizabeth( Betsy) Carrier, Jean Dinwiddie, Joyce Dubow, David Engel, Nkiru Ezeani, Mona Grieser, Morris Klein, Robert Levy, Kendell Matthews, Nanine Meiklejohn, Yvette Monroe, Ruby Moone, Sibon Neube, Karon Phillips, Helen Pross, Richard Ricciardi, Edgar Rivas, Beverly Rollins ,Barbara Selter, Katie Smith, Mary Sweeney, Tho Tran, Hillery Tumba, Marsha Weber, T. Ryan Wilson, Arthur Williams, Janice Zalen

**Staff**

Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services; Dr. Patrice McGhee, Director, Area Agency on Aging; Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator; Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Program Manager; Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator; Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator

**Liaisons**

Monique Gardner, African American Health Program, Denise Israel, Montgomery County Department of Transportation; Betty Lam, Montgomery County Office of Community Affairs; Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly Montgomery; Jim Resnick, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue; Robin Riley, Montgomery County Department of Recreation; Stacey Sigler, Montgomery County Department of Recreation; Sara Swarr, Montgomery County Department of Recreation; Arlee Wallace, African American Health Program; Tiffany Ward, Montgomery County Racial Equity Program

## 2022 Commission on Aging Accomplishments

- Through the use of Zoom video, the CoA continued to meet and advocate for issues facing older adults in Montgomery County during the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic and its waning aftermath.
- The Commission on Aging Public Forum: In-Home Care: We Can Do Better hybrid event on May 5, 2022. The event was convened to consider how in-home care needs of the County's growing older adult population are now being met and to explore approaches to better meet them. Presenters included nationally recognized experts in the field of long-term care, community services providers, advocates, and government representatives who focus on in-home care.
- The CoA hosted a virtual Legislative Breakfast for members of the Montgomery County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly.
- Advocated for FY 2023 Budget priorities: The CoA lobbied for resources to be included in the County budget for expansion of in-home care to more older adults in the County, including residents without Medicaid; Increasing funding to help market/promote services available for older adults; funding an Access Hears program (supplying hearing aids and support) to lower income residents; Restoring cuts to the Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA) Escorted Transportation Program; and continuing to expand funding for the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) to produce and preserve affordable rental housing, including older adult housing projects. Commissioners met individually with County Council members and testified twice before the County Council, resulting in all of these priorities being funded by the County Council.
- Worked with Johns Hopkins to develop an Access Hears Pilot Proposal: The CoA worked with staff from Johns Hopkins Medicine to create a proposal for a hearing program to assist low income older adults to obtain hearing devices and navigate the process for selecting hearing aids. This pilot for Montgomery County has been funded through use of ARPA funds. We also wrote a letter to the FDA to support the release of the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Ruling.
- Assisted with Identifying Programs for ARPA funding: The CoA worked with Aging and Disability Services staff to identify a list of priorities to receive enhanced ARPA funding.
- Researched Key Issues and Wrote Advocacy Letters: The Commission sent 10 letters to State and local legislators in support of laws, programs, and services affecting older adults. We lobbied extensively for information about the transfer of the Nursing Home Surveying capability from Montgomery County to the Office of Health Care Quality and sent letters to our state delegation to obtain increased transparency from OHCQ.



- Identified the Need for and Supported a Home and Community- Based Workforce Task Force: The County Executive established a Task Force to identify the issues associated with a scarcity of workers to provide in-home care and make recommendations on how to increase the supply of these workers in Maryland. Several Commissioners served on this Task Force.
- Established a Partnership with University of Maryland Shady Grove: Commissioners worked with UMD students to identify technologies useful to helping older adults age in place. The Commissioners assisted students in developing scenarios of technology usage with maximum impact on older adults.
- Developed FY 2024 Budget Priorities: We prioritized budget items for FY 2024 including Increasing funding for the In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) program for both DHHS staff and contract budgets to eliminate waiting lists; Restoring cuts to the escorted transportation program; Expanding funding for the Housing Initiative Fund; Fully funding the Licensure and Regulatory Nursing Home Inspections Program; and Funding for a full time Facilitator for the Age Friendly Montgomery Program.
- Establish Outreach Programs to Improve Awareness of Resources for Older Adults: Our Communications Committee put in place a program to reinvigorate the Senior Sections in Montgomery County Public Libraries to distribute materials of interest to older adults. We also initiated an Ambassador Program to send speakers to older adult housing communities, senior centers, and other venues.

### **Commission on Aging Budget Priorities**

The CoA develops annual County budget priorities that take into consideration the mission as set forth in the enabling legislation, as well as from information and data collected from County agencies, elected officials, and outside experts.

### **Fiscal Year 2023 Budget priorities:**

- Fund the expansion of in-home care to more older County residents, including those who do not qualify for State programs.
- Increase staffing to improve the timeliness and quality of assessments that determine eligibility to receive HCBS services.
- Increase funding to help market/promote services available for older adults.
- Fund the Access HEARS Program.
- Restore cuts to the Escorted Transportation Program.
- Expand funding for Housing Initiative Fund.
- Fully fund Licensure and Regulatory Nursing Home Inspections Program.
- Funding for a full time Facilitator for the Age-Friendly Montgomery Initiative.

**Additional Commission priorities in ranked order include:**

- Fund a one-stop-shop “Housing Navigator” (a dedicated staff person to field calls/emails for information, and direct residents to information about older adults’ housing-related programs).
- Support purchase of tablets or cell phones and related training programs for older adults to enable telehealth, home safety checks, and activities to decrease social isolation.
- Fund a Senior Fellow position to support the HHS Public Information Officer (Mary Anderson).
- Conduct a feasibility study of clustering in-home care in geographic areas to increase affordability of care.
- Fund part-time Senior Fellow position for 50+ Employment in County Executive’s Office.
- Subsidize medical adult day centers to enable them to pay staff more than minimum wage required by law.
- Use County funding previously used for nursing home surveyors to increase funding for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program.
- Increase funding for tenant support to prevent evictions, including financial assistance with rent.
- Study the impact on County nursing home residents of the State’s takeover of surveyors.
- Study and expand the senior fellows program.
- Provide funding for an independent, comprehensive website for Aging-in-Place villages.
- Enhance funding for DHCA’s new “Housing Marketplace” database.
- Fund a Senior Fellow Position for Aging in the Office of Racial Equity.
- Increase funding for intergenerational programs.
- Fund villages to enable bilingual outreach.
- Provide funding for villages to purchase a camera that would enable hybrid programming (in person and online events).

**Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Priorities:**

- Hire one full-time equivalent position within Aging and Disability Services to serve as a Coordinator for older adult Communications and Outreach to improve awareness of County programs for older adults.
- Increase funding for In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) for both DHHS staff and contract budgets.
- Monitor progress of the Access HEARS pilot and provide funds to extend beyond the ARPA funding.
- Support villages’ efforts to improve cost efficiency and equity and decrease the administrative burdens associated with running a village through development of a “hub and spoke” model.
- Plan and conduct a Telecare/Telehealth demonstration project to improve access to healthcare and support services for older adults.
- Increase funding for mental health outreach for older adults (Senior Outreach Team) to eliminate waiting lists.

- Provide funding and assign staff to plan a Summit on Aging in 2023 to help the County plan for a growing older adult population.
- Provide funds to conduct the nationally recognized “Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity” certification training to Montgomery County drivers of taxicabs and wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Provide gap-filling transportation services to older adults and residents with disabilities to prevent missed medical and other vital appointments.

### **Area Agency on Aging**

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is responsible for the provision of the 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 in 1973 to respond to the needs of Americans ages 60 and older in every local community. The AAA serves as the local entity that administers a far-reaching suite of programs and services to help older adults 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 Older Americans Act to improve the quality of life for older persons by a network that maintains a holistic view of aging. The AAAs are mandated to "foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems to serve older individuals..."

The AAA continues to work closely with our peers and allies in DHHS to ensure all-encompassing service delivery and to provide credible and timely communication to the older adults in our community. Some of the programs and services that the County provides through the oversight of the Area Agency on Aging include:

- The Aging and Disability Services’ Maryland Access Point answering calls to assist seniors, persons with disabilities, and their families to provide 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 (LTCOP).
- The Public Guardianship Program serving persons in need of protective services (as determined by the courts), conducting telephone monitoring of clients with facility staff, and in-person visits.
- The Senior Nutrition Program continued its congregate dining programs for those primarily 60+. The Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese programs are providing restaurant meals in partnership with local restaurants. Existing home-delivered meal providers operated as usual.
- The Mobile Dentist was serving participants with the Montgomery County Senior Centers to provide on-site preventive screenings and basic dental care, using the Mobile Dentist custom-built motor coach at the six senior centers. Services includes comprehensive oral examinations (diagnostic x-rays, oral cancer screening, gum disease

evaluation, examination of tooth decay and existing restorations) and advanced x-rays to determine abscesses and cysts, bone loss, cancerous and non-cancerous tumors, poor tooth and root positions and problems.

- The Assessment, Evaluation, and Review Services (AERS) unit continues to provide comprehensive assessments to residents that are eligible to receive services in the Home Community Based programs.
- The AAA provides nurse monitoring services (via its contract partners) to more than 2,650 Community First Choice Program (CFC) participants. The AAA Supports Planning Agency (SPA) serves a total of 310 individuals in the Community Options Waiver, Community First Choice and Community Personal Assistance Services programs. All services mentioned are Medicaid funded.
- Since 2014 the Villages program has expanded to include over 30 villages. During COVID, villages responded to their members needs by pivoting to online events and programs and many kept up their in-person volunteer services. Villages distributed PPE, shared critical information related to the pandemic with their community members, helped with testing and vaccine access and invested in friendly phone check ins with isolated members.
- The Caregiver Support program's Engage@HOME, a YouTube channel from Montgomery County's Caregiver Support program, allows viewers an opportunity to discover trusted information, quality social engagement, inspiring health and wellness programs, arts and cultural activities and caregiver resources to help county residents maintain resilience. Engage@HOME has reached 18,664 views so far. In FY22 there were 36 caregiver virtual events including 65 workshops and fairs. The Caregiver Support program has also sent out over 1,205 caregiver relation resources, brochures, and printings. The Caregiver eNewsletter currently has 6,514 subscribers.
- In the County's sixth year as an official AARP Age-Friendly community, the Senior Fellow for Age-Friendly Montgomery (AFM) facilitated the growth of the program by: continued planning for quarterly meetings for both the 10 AFM work group co-leaders and AFM Advisory group; increased outreach with presentations on the Commission on Aging's cable television show, 50+ in Montgomery County and with AARP Maryland and other state and local organizations; planning for two first annual regional Age-Friendly events with other Age-Friendly localities and the George Washington University's Center for Health, Humanities, and Aging; and conducted initial planning for joint outreach and communication efforts in collaboration with the County's Commission on Aging.

### **Commission on Aging Background of Older Adults in Montgomery County**

The Commission's work is ever more significant as the older adult population continues to grow. Seniors are the fastest growing age group in the County. By 2040 the Montgomery County older adult population (age 60+) is projected to increase from 233,592 to 315,666, an increase of 35 percent. Life expectancy is also increasing, with the population of older adults age 85+ expected to increase by approximately 77 percent between 2019 and 2030.

The older adult population of Montgomery County is also growing more diverse. Approximately 15 percent of residents age 60 and older are Asian; 14 percent are Black or African American;

and 9 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 37 percent 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 older adults: 12 percent of households headed by an individual age 60+ have income less than 150 percent of poverty or \$18,210 per year for a single person. Housing costs are an issue, particularly for renters. For 24 percent of senior homeowners, housing costs exceed 30 percent of their income; 56 percent of senior renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Looking at the income that older adults need to live independently in Montgomery County, the monthly figure for a renter is \$33,840 a year (37 percent higher than the national average), \$44,268 a year for an individual with a mortgage (40 percent higher than the national average), and \$26,568 a year for an individual without a mortgage (31 percent higher than the national average).

### **CoA Organization and Core Activities**

Commission activities include monthly meetings of the full Commission, the Executive Committee, and each of the four standing committees: Aging in Community, Health and Wellness, Public Policy, and Communications. In addition, the CoA convenes task forces to deal with specific issues. Committees explore topics and issues within their scope and identify challenges and gaps in services and supports. These issues may include such things as budget requests for programs for older adults or advocating at the County- or State-level for laws, services, or programs. The committees often present their research to the full Commission for consideration for further action. The CoA also engages in concentrated studies of other age-relevant issues, which in recent years have included affordable housing, age-related hearing loss, and making home and community-based services more available to both Medicaid-eligible individuals and individuals who are not Medicaid-eligible but struggle financially. Focus or task groups are created as needed to examine discrete issues such as social isolation, racial equity, dementia services and policing, and transportation.

The CoA also co-produces the monthly public access cable television program, *50+ in Montgomery County* (previously *Seniors Today*), which informs the community about issues, programs, and activities for older adults. Commission member Katie Smith has hosted most of the programs with Past-Chair Jean Dinwiddie hosting several shows on such topics as pets, Villages, celebrating Black History month, staying safe in your home, joy of gardening, hospice and palliative care, healthy aging, Medicare, technology, and mental health. The shows are broadcasted several times each month and are available for online viewing and on YouTube.

All CoA meetings are open to the public. To help form the Commission's priorities and advocacy, full Commission and committee meetings frequently include invited guests who share their expertise on important topics. Representatives from other Montgomery County Commissions, Boards, Committees, Departments, and Agencies, and interested stakeholders also attend meetings. Several Commissioners serve as liaisons to other relevant organizations and groups.

Commissioners are in frequent contact with the County Executive, County Councilmembers, department directors and staff, State and Federal legislators, members of the public, and others

to advance programs, services, and policies on behalf of County older adults. At the County level, the CoA provides oral and written testimony on legislative, budget, and program issues and priorities pending before the County Council. In addition, CoA members meet with the County Executive, members of the Council, and Executive Branch directors; have ongoing communication with department staff; and collaborate with other County Boards, Committees, Commissions, and stakeholders on issues of mutual interest. CoA members also engage with non-profit partners, private sector groups, and other stakeholders to identify challenges and develop solutions.

At the State level, the 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. Members also testify at County and State hearings.

At the Federal level, the CoA writes letters on priority issues to appropriate Congressional representatives. Members also support Congressional and Executive Branch outreach conducted by national organizations that represent the older adult population on issues affecting Montgomery County residents.

**The CoA usually convenes two significant annual events:**

**A Public Forum** for older adults in the community to learn about issues that may affect them, and for the CoA to hear from older residents, caregivers, and service providers about their issues of concern. This year, the theme of the public forum, held on May 5, was In Home Care; We Can Do Better.

**A Legislative Breakfast** that allows the CoA the opportunity to meet with members of the Montgomery County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly and inform them about the Commission's work and priorities. It is also a chance for the CoA to learn about the legislators' plans for the upcoming legislative session and for all participants to identify areas for working together to benefit the older adults in the County.

These two events enhance CoA members' knowledge of the county and help to develop CoA advocacy priorities. This year the Legislative Breakfast was held virtually by zoom. The public forum was held in-person and hybrid.

**Key CoA Advocacy Activities in Recent Years**

The CoA believes that Montgomery County continues to make progress toward becoming a Community for a Lifetime as envisioned by the Senior Agenda, a document that was developed by the CoA and endorsed by the County Executive and the County Council in 2012. In keeping with the vision and goals of the Senior Agenda, the CoA continues to focus on quality of life 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 State law, but that require supplemental County funding to meet the need. These programs and services include the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Adult Protective Services, Public Guardianship, Adult Foster Care, Respite Care, senior centers, and a number of transportation, housing, and nutrition programs.

**State Level.** The CoA has supported several successful State legislative initiatives in recent years including reducing property tax burdens on older homeowners, the creation of the Maryland Durable Medical Equipment Re-Use Program, and establishing a telephone reassurance program for older adults (Senior Call Check).

**Advocacy for Innovative Programming.** In recent years, the CoA has successfully advocated for the creation of several innovative County programs and services for older adults. The CoA advocated for use of ARPA funds to support an Access HEARS pilot in the county. The CoA advocated for funding to plan a hub and spoke model for administrative services for the Villages. Other pioneering programs that Montgomery County instituted with CoA support include the Senior Center Plus Program for older adults with cognitive impairments, and a partnership between Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services and the Department of Health and Human Services to provide home health and other assistance to frequent callers to 911.

**Advocacy for an Age-Friendly Montgomery County.** The County now enjoys the status of a designated Age-Friendly Community. The County Executive established an Age-Friendly Montgomery County Advisory Group that is comprised of department directors and community leaders who oversee the efforts of the workgroups for 10 domains essential to the Age-Friendly community: Civic and Social Involvement; Communication; Elder Abuse Prevention; Employment; Health and Wellness; Home- and Community-Based Services; Housing; Planning; Open Spaces, Parks, and Community Buildings; Senior Public Safety; and Transportation and Mobility. Together, these public and private sector partners plan for and guide work to address issues, meet challenges, and build on opportunities for each of the domains.

The CoA actively supports and works in collaboration with the Age-Friendly Montgomery County effort. The Commission Chair serves on the advisory group, and CoA members serve on the domain workgroups. Additional information about the Age-Friendly Initiative is available at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/age-friendly.html>.

**The “Commission on Aging Briefing Book”** was developed to help acquaint the County Executive and County Councilmembers with the Commission’s important work. The book provides information on nine key issues facing older adults in Montgomery County including: affordable housing; assisted living affordability; caregiver support; elder abuse, neglect and exploitation; health and social services; quality of care in long-term care facilities; social isolation; and transportation (including driver and pedestrian safety). It also addresses the cross-cutting topics of diversity, communications, and ageism. In 2022, one of the first tasks of the Commission’s newly formed Communications Committee was to update the Briefing Book.



The updated Briefing Book is available on the CoA website at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAindex.html>.

## **2022 Commission on Aging Advocacy**

To improve the Commission's effectiveness as advocates, The Community Action Board provided valuable training to the CoA tailored specifically for the CoA's advocacy and letter writing efforts.

### **County**

The Commission recognizes and appreciates the efforts of the County Executive and the County Council to respond to the needs of all older adults in the County, including those who are low-income and otherwise vulnerable, and those who are healthier and more vital. The CoA's advocacy includes written and oral testimony at County Council meetings and hearings, meetings with department directors and representatives, and meetings with individual Councilmembers. The County Executive, Councilmembers, and other officials are invited to CoA meetings, and the Commission welcomes any communications to discuss issues affecting older adults in the County.

To develop its FY24 budget priorities, the CoA held a special meeting in July where, building on previous goals and recommendations, it developed its list of budget priorities for FY24. Guest speakers at the September Commission meeting explained the timeframe of the County budget process and provided other useful insights on how to increase collaboration with the County. These helpful speakers were:

- The Honorable Gabe Albornoz, then President of the Montgomery County Council;
- Essie McGuire , DHHS Legislative Analyst

CoA Chair, Barbara Selter, presented the CoA's budget priorities in testimony before the County Council's Health and Human Services Committee.

While the CoA may not be able to advocate for all issues, especially since it is often asked to identify its top two or three budget priorities, the complete list is important because it provides additional guidance for advocacy moving forward. Some budget items for which the CoA has advocated in the past received support even though they did not rise to the highest level of priority in 2022. The FY24 Budget priorities are listed on page 6 of this report.

During 2022, the CoA engaged in several other advocacy efforts on behalf of older adults in the County. The most notable effort was participation in the **Home & Community Based Service (HCBS) Workforce Task Force**.

In 2022, the Chair of the CoA, Barbara Selter and Vice-Chair of the COA, Edgar Rivas were members of the County-wide Workforce Task Force under the auspices of the County Executive.



The Home and Community Based (HCBS) Workforce Task Force served as a collaborative collective of appointed members from vested entities charged with examining the current HCBS landscape and producing actionable recommendations to improve the HCBS work force in Montgomery County.

To fully examine the direct care service industry and offer credible solutions to address the needs of the direct care workforce, the TF leadership decided to examine the issue through the lens of four overarching domains that aligned with the HCBS Workforce Task Force Charge. The four domains include:

- Career Pathways, Recruitment, & Training
- Wages & Benefits
- Partnerships, Working Conditions, & Retention
- Communication & Technology

The Task Force focused on understanding the difference and unique challenges of each service industry represented on the workgroup and prioritized the input of in-home and institutional direct care service industry workers (for the purpose of this study called Direct Service Professionals (DSPs)) and service providers (DSP employing agencies) by convening focus groups to take firsthand accounts of what is needed to improve the system. The focus group findings highlighted answers to questions that were purposefully developed to guide the DSPs conversation, identify barriers that lead to gaps in the workforce and a high turnover rate, and solicited feedback and suggestions from the DSPs.

The four domains were used to divide the TF into subcommittees. The subcommittees were tasked with assessing their respective focus area, identifying gaps, and recommending changes to improve the current state of each focus area. Some subcommittee key findings include:

- Professionalize the direct care profession
- Start recruitment with high school seniors
- Provide centralized and more wide-spread training opportunities
- Support better wages and benefits needed to retain DSPs
- Improve working conditions and communication for DSPs

Based on the findings of each subcommittee, the DSP and service provider focus groups, the subject matter expert presentations, and solicited input from all TF members, the TF put forth comprehensive local, state, and federal recommendations for consideration to improve the current state of the home and community-based service workforce.

### **State Advocacy**

The Public Policy Committee reviewed dozens of bills filed in the Maryland General Assembly during its 2022 session with a focus on bills of interest to older adults in Montgomery County and within the CoA's general priorities. The Committee researched relevant topics, including aging in place, assisted living, Medicaid waivers, affordable housing, and protection of renters.

The Public Policy Committee led the drafting of position letters in support of several bills including:

- SB0863-The Maryland Medical Assistance Program Personal Care Aides -Reimbursement and Required Wage
- HB981- The Maryland Medical Assistance Program- Personal Care Aides- Reimbursement and Required Wage
- HB0008- The Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (aka Time to Care Act of 2022)
- SB720- State Board of Examiners of Nursing Home Administrators-Renaming and Licensure of Assisted Living Managers
- HB456- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- HB 80- Home and Community Based Services Waiver- Participation and Applications
- HB006- Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults
- HB247- Insurance -Medicare Supplement Policy Plans- Open Enrollment Period Following Birthday
- SB0006- Tenant Protection Bill
- SB 28- Home and Community Based Services Waiver

### **CoA Response Office of Health Care Quality Decision to Terminate its Memorandum of Understanding for County Surveyors and Inspections of County Nursing Facilities**

In addition to reviewing and supporting proposed legislation, the CoA also responds to State changes to programs that impact Montgomery County's older residents, and, occasionally, the Commission must advocate to both County and State officials. The Maryland Office of Health Care Quality's decision to terminate a decades-long Memorandum of Understanding with Montgomery County that allowed the County to conduct surveys of County nursing facilities is one such situation. Because this change seemed very likely to lead to decreased oversight of Montgomery County nursing facilities and less coordination with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, the CoA quickly became involved in this issue by:

- Conducting a telephone call and writing an email and letter to the Office of Health Care Quality, requesting additional information.
- Sending letters to State legislators requesting a study of the impact of this change to Montgomery County nursing facility residents.
- Sending letters to the County Council and the County Executive expressing its specific concerns.

In the period between July when nursing facility inspections in Montgomery County became the responsibility of the Office of Health Care Quality and November, State staff, after receiving many complaints, only investigated one of those complaints. There were no infection control or annual recertification surveys conducted. Montgomery County officials, fully understanding the seriousness of this situation, prepared a new Memorandum of Understanding that stated that the County would cover the entire cost of the surveys, but the State has not agreed to the new

arrangement. The Commission actively and strongly advocated for a resolution to this dire situation by performing the following activities:

- August 1, 2022 - Letter to Senator Nancy King - Nursing Home Inspections.  
December 8, 2022 - Presented the overview and status of the issue at the CoA Legislative Breakfast.
- December 21, 2022, Select Commissioners met with members of **Governor-elect Wes Moore transition team**, State Senator Susan Lee, and State Delegate Ariana Kelly to discuss the lack of nursing home inspections, and other older adult issues.

### **Commission On Aging – Letters**

**The Commission on Aging wrote the following letters:**

- January 27, 2022 - Letter to Chris Conklin Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF)
- February 11, 2022 – Letter to Council President Alborno: THRIVE 2050 Plan
- April 13, 2022 - Letter congratulating the County Council and County Executive on the Sandy Spring Village Construction Project
- May 2, 2022 - Letter to Councilmembers Tom Hucker, Has Riemer and Evan Glass – Use of Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF)
- July 20, 2022 - Thank you letter to the County Council for including FY 2023 Budget Priorities in the County Budget
- October 11, 2022 – Letter to Montgomery County Public Libraries, Director, Anita Vassallo – Noting the MCPL strategic plan’s lack of emphasis for older adult programming and services.

### **Other Activities**

- The Commission nominated late Commissioner Miriam Kelty and Odessa Shannon for the 2022 Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame.
- Odessa Shannon was inducted into the 2022 Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame.

### **2022 Commission on Aging Activities**

#### **Public Forum**

The theme of the CoA’s 2022 public forum was In Home Care: We Can Do Better. The forum, held on May 5, 2022. This year forum was held in partnership with the City of Gaithersburg at the Activity Center at Bohrer Park in conjunction with the City’s Active Aging Expo. The forum was convened to consider how in-home care needs of the County’s growing older adult population are now being met and to explore approaches to better meet them. Presenters included nationally recognized experts in the field of long-term care, community service providers, advocates, and government representatives who focus on in-home care.

The Morning Keynote address “Making It Safe to Grow Old” was presented by Joanne Lynn, MD, Clinical Professor of Medicine, Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Care at The George Washington University. She described necessary elements of support that enable people to remain safely in their homes for as long as possible, including the need for adequate food, accessible housing, and transportation. The afternoon keynote address “Caregiver Considerations” was provided by Robin Stone DPH, Senior Vice President for research at Leading Age. Dr. Stone describe several caregiver considerations, including the fact that our society needs to learn how best to deliver services to different culture. Following both addresses expert panels discuss key elements of presentations. Of note where the reports given by a county employees Jennifer Long and Tina Purser Langley regarding the County’s resources available to older adults and persons with disabilities including caregivers and respite care services. Individuals were encouraged to call 240-777-3000 or visit the County’s website ([www.montgomerycountymaryland.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymaryland.gov)) for more information.

### **COA Community for a Lifetime Award**

On May 5, 2022, the presentation of the first CoA Community for a Lifetime Award. The awardees were Marcia Pruzan, Senior Fellow for Age-Friendly Montgomery, Carol Craig, Director of the Montgomery County Senior Nutrition Program; and Rhonda Brandes, Program Manager for the Senior Nutrition Program.



On December 17, 2022, the presentation of the second CoA Community for a Lifetime Awards went to the Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA) Sara Fought, Transportation and Shane Rock, Executive Director. JCA received the Award for their outstanding work with older adults in Montgomery County. Former CoA Commissioner Austin Heyman was honored for the work he has done with the Commission intergenerational programs, and Age Friendly.

### **Legislative Breakfast**

For many years, the commission has hosted an annual Legislative Breakfast to meet with members of the County's delegation to the State Legislature. County staff also are invited to this event. The Breakfast provides the Commission, delegation members, and County staff the opportunity to share accomplishments of the past year and to identify issues for the upcoming legislative session.

The COA held its 2022 Annual Legislative Breakfast on December the 8th via Zoom. the Commission presentation highlighted the diverse constituency it serves;

- Barbara Selter, Chair, Commission on Aging provided 2021 and 2022 CoA accomplishments. Ryan Wilson, Public Policy Committee provided CoA Legislative and Budget Priorities. Janice Zalen discussed the nursing home oversight issues and the current status of the situation. David Engel gave an overview of the recent 2022 Public Forum on In-Home Care. Leslie Frey discussed that with regards to the nursing home oversight that she was representing the County working with OHCQ.
- Senator Sara Lee discussed that she is a member of the of the Governor's transition team and would like to like to invite a few CoA members to speak to the team. She was concerned that the MOU for nursing homes ended. She has LTC as a priority.
- Senator Nancy King discussed that she was appointed to the Governors steering committee. She discussed that her husband was in a nursing home for three years and that everyone in nursing homes needs advocacy. She has LTC as a priority. She noted the ghost gun bill and MD online Consumer Protection Act.
- Del. Ariana Kelly discussed her passion for aging issues and is working to fix the Time to Care Act and is also working on workforce issues.
- Loring Charkoudian's priorities are food security and access, pedestrian safety, and energy efficiency legislation equity.
- Del. Marc Korman pointed out the new over 65 tax credit for those with incomes less than \$100,000.
- Del. Vaughn Stewart discussed the Whole Home Repairs Act, stopping spam calls, LTC insurance reform, and a housing voucher bill.
- Del. David Moon is on the Judicial Committee and wants to give the AG more power to stop financial exploitation.
- Del. Jared Solomon is on the house appropriations committee and is interested in filling positions in the state workforce. He noted the drug take back program and his interest in raising speed camera limits to 45 mph.

- Del. Julie Palakovich Carr is the chair of the Mont. Co. Delegation working on four housing initiatives to incentivize local governments to add housing.
- David Fraser-Hildago is working on climate change, renewable energy, public health, and an anti-fracking bill. He is one of 68 members of the Hispanic Caucus

Montgomery County Commission on Aging met with the **Wes Moore Health and Wellness Transition Team Members** to discuss issues impacting Older Citizens in Montgomery County on December 21, 2022. The agenda and those in attendance are below.

- I. Welcome, Senator Susan Lee, MD State Senator
- II. Nursing Home Oversight Janice Zalen, Commissioner MC Commission on Aging  
Leslie Frey, Intergovernmental Relations MC Dept. of Health and Human Services
- III. Home and Community Based Services David Engel, In-coming Chair MC Commission on Aging
- IV. Long Term Care Insurance Barbara Selter, Chair MC Commission on Aging  
Morris Klein, Esq., Commissioner Commission on Aging
- V. Financial scams and fraud Barbara Mulitz

**Mont. County Delegation attendees:**

Senator Susan Lee, Michael Lore (Chief of Staff Sen. Lee), Ernest Bailey (Staff Sen. Lee)  
Delegate Ariana Kelly

Wes Moore Health Care Executive Policy Committee Co-Chairs  
Marie Grant (Principal Healthcare Analyst)

Dr. Josh Sharfstein (Vice Dean for Public Health Practice and Community Engagement at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health)

Lisa Brown (SEIU 1199 Executive Vice President will be serving on the Health Care Executive Policy Committee)

**Mont. County Gov. attendees:**

Leslie Frey - Mont Co.  
Shawn Brennan - Mont Co.

**CoA attendees:**

Barbara Selter  
Morris Klein  
David Engel  
Janice Zalen  
Barbara Mulitz, CoA Alumn

**Featured Speakers at Full CoA Meetings in 2022**

The Commission was fortunate to be able to learn from distinguished speakers. Experts presenting at the 2022 full CoA meetings included:

January: Lylie Fisher, Chair, Age Friendly HCBS Workgroup

- February: Assistant Chief Francke and Assistant Chief Facciolo, Montgomery Police Department, Reimagining Policing
- March: Ben Marcantonio, President and COO of National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, Hospice and Palliative Care
- April: Susy Murphy, Executive Director, Debra Levy Eldercare Associates, Aging Life Care
- May: Phoebe Shin, Asian American Health Program, Building Bridges: Improving Cultural Competency with Asian Americans
- June: County Council President Gabe Albornoz, and DHHS Legislative Analyst Essie McGuire, Budget Priorities of County Council and County Government for FY 2024
- July: No guest speakers; special CoA meeting to determine budget priorities.
- August: Summer break; no meeting
- September: Leslie Frey, Intergovernmental Relations Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County, State Legislature Advocacy Process
- October: Tim Ferguson, Fire and Explosive Investigations and Avila Graves, Program Manager Mobile Integrated Health program, Fire Death Among Older Adults
- November: Margo Quinlan, Director, Youth and Older Adults, Mental Association of Maryland and Josi Makon, Older Adults Behavioral Health Coordinator, Services and Recovery Supports Team, Local, Older Adults Mental Health Issues
- December: Carol Craig, Senior Nutrition Program

**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 detail on specific issues, develop projects, and identify potential priorities. The CoA committees include Aging in Community, Health and Wellness, Public Policy and Communications.

**Aging in Community**

In 2022, The Aging in Community (AIC) focused on accessible and affordable housing for older adults, food insecurity, technology to help people age in place, design for life, and the Villages. Specific AIC concerns about inadequate County responses to housing questions were addressed



in a meeting between County officials and AIC members. The AIC hosted speakers on Thrive 2050, and the Villages - Hub and Spoke Model.

## **Health and Wellness**

The Health and Wellness Committee's featured topic this year is "Preparing for Life Transitions as We Age." With attention being given to planning for transitions from the perspective of health, finance, legal, housing, and social activities. Members of the committee divided the topic into sub-working groups with each group having an area working together to develop a printed product to assist older adults in planning and being prepared as they age.

## **Public Policy**

The Public Policy Committee takes the lead on much of the Commission's advocacy on priority issues at the County, State, and Federal levels. During 2022, the committee reviewed proposed legislation at these three levels of government, researched relevant topics as needed, and drafted testimonies as letters of support and other written documents for the CoA. This committee also took the lead in convening the Annual Legislative Breakfast. The Public Policy Committee performed the following activities:

- Monitored proposed Federal, State, and local legislation affecting older adults and led the drafting of CoA position letters that were communicated to members of the Montgomery County delegation in Annapolis.
- Drafted letters to the State Office of Health Care Quality, State Legislators, and members of the Montgomery County Council expressing concerns about the termination of the Memorandum of Understanding regarding nursing facility inspections.
- Drafted a letter to Council President Albornoz on the COA response to the THRIVE 2050 Plan.
- Drafted a letter to Councilmembers Tom Hucker, Has Riemer and Evan Glass on the use of Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF)
- Drafted a letter submitting comments on the proposed rules for Establishing Over-the-Counter (OTC) Hearing Aids published in the Federal Register on October 20, 2021.

## **Communications**

The Communication committee member Katie Smith is the host for the 50+ in Montgomery program. Topics included: Diane Rehm with End of Life Issues; Rafael Espinoza, Director of State Health Insurance Program, Medicare; Shivali Haribhakti, Senior Planet and Mitsuko Herrera, Montgomery Connects Program Director; Rev Vikram, CoA Alumnus, and psychiatrist, Mental Health and the Holidays. The Committee updated the CoA Handbook. The following are ongoing programs: Working with Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) to place materials in libraries for seniors. The Communications Committee is also working on a new project to develop an Ambassador program where commissioners will inform older adults of Montgomery County's programs and services for seniors.



### **Commission on Aging Plans for 2023**

The Commission on Aging will undertake the following activities in 2023:

- Meet regularly in standing committees and as a full Commission to implement Commission goals and priorities.
- Continue engaging with elected officials and department heads on important older adult issues in the County.
- Identify and examine one or more focus areas of importance to older adults in the County.
- Convene a public forum in May 2023.
- Meet with County Councilmembers on CoA budget priorities in April 2023.
- Advocate on priority issues, including budget issues, at the County, State and Federal levels.
- Identify CoA priorities included in the FY24 budget and establish FY25 County budget priorities.
- Host a Legislative Breakfast in November 2023.
- Review Final Report of the County Executive's Home and Community-Based Services Workforce Task Force.
- Continue to participate in the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Advisory Group and its workgroups and monitor implementation of the Age-Friendly strategic plan as appropriate.
- Learn more about in-home supports and home and community-based services.
- Attend Department of Health and Human Services' quarterly Boards, Committees, and Commissions meetings and prepare quarterly reports.
- Collaborate with other Boards, Committees, Commissions, and other groups as appropriate
- Support the Montgomery County Summit on Aging in October 2023.



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