



Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Director's Quarterly Leadership Meeting with Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCC)

Date: FY23 Q3 & Q4 January - June 2023 Report

BCC: Commission on Aging (CoA)

BCC Representative: David Engel, Chair; Joyce Dubow, Secretary

Montgomery County's Commission on Aging (CoA) continues to serve as an advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of the County's older residents by identifying significant issues where its voice on the needs of older adults can make a difference. This report presents the advocacy and educational activities of the CoA for the first two quarters of calendar year 2023.

Activities Update

Committee Meetings¹

Health and Wellness - The committee worked on the development of its Life Transitions project that includes a series of factsheets that address important issues older adults should consider as they age. The compendium of materials includes useful resources for additional information and a worksheet. At the second quarter's end, the documents were being prepared for printing. Plans are underway for distribution of these materials at the Summit on Aging in October.

Aging in the Community - The committee conceived, organized, and executed the CoA's Annual Forum. (See section on Forum, below.)

Public Policy - The committee monitored and reviewed legislative proposals of significance to older adults at the county and state level and identified several proposals that merited the commission's support. Letters were written by members of the committee and ratified by the full commission on the following issues:

- Support for:
 - SB0397 requiring private insurers to cover the cost of hearing aids
 - HB0028 to provide a tax credit for caregivers who care for older family members
 - HB318 to require the Maryland Department of Health to increase the hourly reimbursement rate for certain personal assistance services and require provider agencies to pay the greater of \$16 per hour or 64 percent of the reimbursement rate to personal care aides
 - SB0845 that would authorize an individual, under very specific circumstances, to request aid in dying
 - SB0397 to require private insurers to cover the cost of hearing
 - The Montgomery County Pedestrian Master Plan with recommendations pertaining to older

adults

- In addition, the committee continued to advocate for resolving concerns about nursing home inspections in the county. Members met with the newly-elected governor's transition team to describe frustration and concern in dealing with state agencies on the issue; wrote to the newly appointed Secretary of Health of Maryland describing the ongoing concerns; and continued to be in contact with appropriate county officials to try to reach an appropriate resolution to concerns about failure of the state to conduct and oversee an effective nursing home inspection process.

Communications

- 50+ in Montgomery interviewed guests from a variety of domains during each quarter: Marc Elrich County Executive, Evan Glass, County Council President, Megan Tracy Benson, Empowering the Ages, Kathleen Dennis, Heyman intergenerational Center, Kathleen McGuinness, SmithLife Homecare, David Engel, Chair, Commission on Aging, Mary Travaglini, Organic Lawn and Landscape Department of Environmental Protection, Sara Swarr and Kathleen Lieberon, Department of Recreation and Montgomery County Centenarians Program, Cindy Porter, CEO, Success Thru Style, Monica Barnett, CEO Blue Print for Style.
- The Committee helped maintain the commission's website and continued to update the CoA member orientation booklet, and Briefing book to ensure they are current.
- Working with the County's head librarian and Aging and Disability staff, the committee is working to establish a program where individual CoA members will be responsible for working with one of the Montgomery County Public Library Branches. At that branch, the liaison will establish a working relationship with the librarian and make monthly visits to the library to ensure the library's older adult section is organized, complete, and well-stocked. With the librarian, the CoA liaison will periodically evaluate the materials provided. The liaison will also work with CoA's Aging and Disability staff to order new materials as needed.
- The committee developed a 6-month pilot Ambassador Program that seeks to educate older adults about the CoA, relevant County services, programs, and issues and solicit feedback regarding their concerns. Each Ambassador, along with a companion, will deliver an approved presentation to groups in the community. Presentations may take place at Senior Centers, congregate living facilities, libraries, and other locations where older adults gather. The presentations will be developed by the Committee members and Aging and Disability staff. One such program was presented at the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center in May, at which participants were given the County's "File of Life" and "Connect with Montgomery County Aging and Disability Resources" magnets. Participants also offered valuable feedback on a range of topics that will contribute to the commission's future work.

Routine Reports to the Commission

- Updates from Dr. Patrice McGhee, Director of the Montgomery County AAA. These updates included a summary of personnel changes, including vacancies and new hires,

budget updates, the disposition of ARPA funds, and special projects overseen by the AAA.

- Updates from the Director of Aging and Disability
- Liaison Reports- The Commission receives reports from community non-profits, advocacy organizations and county departments that inform the commission of relevant programs, projects, and activities they are conducting for the benefit of older adults.
 - The commission regularly hears from the African American Health Program; Age Friendly; the Latino Health Initiative, the Asian American Health Initiative; the Department of Recreation and Parks; the Department of Transportation; Maryland National Park and Planning Commission; The Villages; JCA.
 - The commission also receives ad hoc reports from organizations seeking to coordinate/collaborate with the commission: Lindsay Luhn, MC Volunteer Center; Eric Colchamiro- head of government affairs at Alzheimer's Association; Janine Tursini- Arts for the Ages (whose goal is to reduce social isolation by means of arts programming.)

Education and monthly meeting presenters

- *Discussion of HB-0933 (End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act) followed by a presentation* from Donna Smith, Area Campaign Director for Compassion and Choices who described how the present proposal differs from the bills that had been previously introduced and defeated. (It should be noted that the commission attempted to invite a speaker who opposed this proposal in order to have a balanced discussion about its provisions. However, we were unable to find someone willing to address the Commission and therefore the chair referred to the testimony of known opponents to the bill and summarized the concerns they had raised when similar legislative had been proposed in earlier sessions of the state legislature.
- The County Executive summarized his Recommended FY 24 operating budget Senior priorities.
- Marla Lahat, Home Care Partners (In-home aide services, Safe at Home, and Lite Care programs) Presented a slide presentation about home care.
- Laurie Orlov, founder of Aging and Health Technology Watch and an expert in market research, trends, blogs and reports that provide thought leadership, analysis and guidance about health and aging-related technologies and services that enable boomers and seniors to sustain and improve their quality of life.
- April Matt Losak, CEO of Renters Alliance.
- May Carmel Roques, MD Department of Aging, Secretary and Jenna Crawley, Director of Multi-sector Engagement and Age Friendly Initiatives, Maryland Department of Aging
- June in person at the Wheaton Recreation Center featured a discussion of county budget process with Councilmember Alborno, council staff Beth Shuman and Legislative analyst, Tara Clemons Johnson. Carol Craig, Director of the Senior Nutrition Program, led a Senior Nutrition Program presentation and the CoA and guests shared SNP meals after the meeting.
- Review of the National Community Survey that addresses the "livability" of Montgomery County.
- Description of a partnership with Montgomery County, a firm called AHC, Habitat for

Humanity, and the State government that will develop homes for 195 households- the biggest ever affordable housing project in the county at the corner of Veirs Mill Rd. and Randolph Rd.

Forum

In partnership with the City of Gaithersburg Acting Aging Expo, the commission held its annual Public Forum. The 2023 program, titled, "Smart Homes- Smarter Care: Technology that Supports Aging in Place" featuring national experts and local practitioners who described how technology can help older adults remain safe and independent in their homes. The Active Aging Expo showcased many of these technologies in the Exhibit Hall. The audience, present at the forum and virtually, consisted of older adults, family caregivers, government officials, representatives from not-for-profit agencies, and others.

Community for a Lifetime Awards

During the Public Forum in May, the Commission presented its Community for a Lifetime awards to the 2023 recipients: Dr. Odile Brunetto, Ms. Elva Jadlin, and GROWS (The Grassroots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors), represented by its president, Ms. Meagan Sexton. The purpose of the "Community for a Lifetime" Award is to formally recognize the contributions of members of the Montgomery County community who help to advance the vision and mission of the Commission on Aging to enable older adults to live quality lives, regardless of their abilities, so that Montgomery County is their community for a lifetime. Recognizing Montgomery County's diversity and that older adults are the fastest growing demographic in the County, the Commission serves as a valued voice for older adults.

Collaboration with other Boards, Commissions, and Committees

HCBS Workforce Task Force- The CoA Chair, Barbara Selter, worked with the Age Friendly Home and Community Based Services Work Group on a series of Round Tables to address concerns associated with ensuring a sufficient supply of direct care workers to support Home and Community Based Services for Montgomery County citizens. A key recommendation from the Round Tables was to establish a county-wide Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Taskforce. In response to this recommendation, the County Executive established the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Taskforce under the auspices of the Area Agency on Aging. The Task Force is charged with developing a report on the state of the Direct Care Workforce in Montgomery County that describes the current state of the direct care workforce, identifies gaps in the workforce infrastructure, and makes recommendations for improving the workforce in Montgomery County. The Commission's previous chair (who remains a commissioner) and co-chair participated in the development and presentation to the county executive and council members of the final report. The commission is studying the recommendations in the report to determine how the commission can best advance those most feasible for the commission to pursue.

Other

- David Engel, Chair of the commission, attended the Interagency Commission on Homelessness on May 24th, 2023 to hear the review of the annual point in time survey, hear Committee updates, and get updated on the Zero for All campaign.
- On 1/26/23 the chair attended the combined meeting for Boards, Committees, Commissions and presented the CoA quarterly update. On May 10th, 2023, in lieu of the 1st Quarter of 2023 zoom meeting, the BCC's had an in-person event with James C. Bridgers, Jr., Ph.D., MBA, Acting Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. The Chairs and Vice Chairs from each body were invited, the Service Area Chiefs, the BCC liaisons, the Program Managers of the multicultural programs, and other DHHS personnel. Some members of the County Executive's Office and County Councilmembers and staff were there.
- The chair attended the JCA Interages Advisory Committee meeting on June 6, 2023 to discuss the MCPS Strategic Priorities, get Funding updates, and other Committee news.
- Age Friendly: CoA members, David Engel, Marsha Weber, and Jean Dinwiddie are on the planning committee for the October 26th Montgomery County Summit on Aging. Monthly planning meetings include leaders of the Age Friendly workgroup domains, Shawn Brennan, and Odile Brunetto.
- The chair, David Engel, represents the CoA at the Age Friendly Advisory Group periodic meetings and Jean Dinwiddie Co-chairs the Age Friendly Communications workgroup domain.
- Wayne Berman, Commissioner, participates in a working group organized by the Superintendent of the Montgomery County Public Schools to address intergenerational collaboration. The group includes representatives from MCPS, intergenerational non-profits, OASIS, and other organizations. The first meeting was March 23, 2023.
- Attendance at Affordable housing Summit was supported by the CoA. Three commissioners attended.
- The chair attended a meeting addressing the reboot of the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) to address affordable housing, specifically with regard to Senior Housing and the MPDU program.
- The chair attended the Interagency Commission on Homelessness with the new Chief, Christine Hong from the DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness (SEPH). Last month, David raised the issue of homelessness and requested the AIC to put Homelessness on its agenda.
- Members of the commission met with all 11 members of the county council to discuss the CoA's budget priorities and to learn about the agenda of the elected officials.
- The Commission on Aging received recognition at the Department of Recreation's Centenarian Celebration that celebrated the County Centenarians.

- See discussion under Committee Meetings (above) for additional information about commission relationships with other bodies.

Upcoming Activities

- 50+ Montgomery is planning to feature guests who will discuss commemorate Health Aging month in September with a program on exercise and nutrition. Other planned features include the Summit on Aging and prescription medications.
- The commission will meet in July to consider its budget priorities for FY25
- The commission will hear presentations from experts on the Medicare program in September.
- In October, the commission will participate in the Summit on Aging.
- There will be a presentation to the commission on universal design and housing in November.

ⁱ The Commission has four standing committees and an Executive Committee, each of which meets once a month. These committees are: Health and Wellness, Aging in the Community, Public Policy, and Communications. All meetings are open to the public and members need not be commissioners to participate. The Executive committee consists of the officers of the commission and the chairs of the committees. Occasionally, a working group will be established to work on a particular issue that reports to a particular committee.