

Commission on Aging Public Policy Committee

June 13, 2024

9:30 – 11:00 Zoom Minutes

Attendees:

Commissioners: Kate Stein (PPC co-chair) David Engel (CoA chair), Linda Bergofsky, Janice Zalen, Barbara Selter, Betsy Carrier, Wayne Berman --Staff: Pazit Aviv,

The Minutes for the May 9, 2024 meeting were approved unanimously.

Agenda:

Discussion / approval of May minutes

State update-

Nursing home inspections and OHCQ meeting
Kramer contact

County update-

Support of Bill 6-24
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Issues

Discussion of CoA policy priorities

Process for voting on next year's budget priorities

1. Nursing home oversight and OHCQ meeting

- **Detailed summary of CoA, MoCo DHHS, MDH meeting on May 21. Attendees:** Dr. James C. Bridgers, Jr., Director, Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. Patrice McGhee, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Dr. Nina Ashford, Chief, Public Health, Dr. Kisha Davis, County Health Officer, David Engel, Chair, Commission on Aging, Morris Klein, Commissioner, Commission on Aging, Janice Zalen, Commissioner, Commission on Aging, Linda Bergofsky, Commissioner, Commission on Aging, Pazit Aviv, MDH - Secretary Herrera Scott, Marie Grant, MDH, Dep. Secy Kalyanaraman MDH

No issues from the CoA letter were addressed adequately. Dr. Bridgers announced the resumption of discussion within a small workgroup to initiate a new MOU. Funding is a problem. Commissioner Bergofsky mentioned the website:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=326b407367b54bd08efd5d5b92e2aa16> showing 63 surveyors and 14 hired in FY24 with 9 vacancies and no advertisements found for the vacancies. Comm. Carrier asks “where is the public outrage? Most likely because they are

unaware. QUESTION: we see the hires, where are the inspections?

Key Discussion Point:

- What are the appropriate next steps? Should the CoA go to the Washington Post?

Decision Made:

- **Decision was reached to first communicate status** with whom we are currently working to resolve issues before publicizing the issue further. The CoA needs to follow up with a series of letters, including an update letter to Sen. Kramer and Del Cullison; cover letters for update letter to Sec. Roques, the County Council, the County Executive; and a further follow up letter to Dr. K. (The CoA will get approval from Leslie Frey prior to sending these letters).
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2. Long-Term Care Ombudsman Issues

Key Discussion Points:

- **Eileen Bennett's Call:** Eileen Bennett reached out regarding the long-term care ombudsman issues. The confusion was about who is currently in charge, as Patrice and Kimberly, who were mentioned, are not certified. The state ombudsman has shown interest in discussing these concerns.
- **Concerns with State Ombudsman:** There is a lack of trust in the state ombudsman's support for the local program.
- **Leadership and Recommendations:** Discussion about the need for a director and potential interventions to improve the program. David and others shared suggestions on how to proceed.
- **Volunteer Issues:** The program has lost many volunteers, partly due to COVID-19 and increased bureaucratic demands. Training requirements have also become more burdensome, contributing to the decline in volunteer participation.
- **Action Steps:** The committee plans to reach out to Dr. Kimberly Johnson for clarification and updates on the program and for further insights.

Decisions Made:

- **Next Steps:** David and Janice will reach out to Dr. Johnson and provide a report in the next meeting.
 - **Further Research:** The committee will research and discuss recommendations for program improvement in the next meeting.
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3. Villages Funding

Key Discussion Points:

- **Funding Gap:** The Villages Consortium Bill passed at the MD General Assembly, but funding will not start until fiscal year 2026, leaving a gap in funding for the upcoming year.
- **ARPA Funds:** There is a possibility of diverting unutilized ARPA funds to cover the funding gap. A proposal will be prepared for \$70,000 in emergency funding.
- **Communication:** The County and CoA need to be informed about the new funding developments and coordinate letters accordingly.

Decisions Made:

- **Letter Approval:** The committee discussed and voted to approve a letter requesting county funding, with some changes to tone and content to reflect the latest information on ARPA funds.

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- **Acknowledgment of Efforts and Commission Involvement:** There is a need to keep the full commission updated and involved in advocacy efforts.
 - **Partners in Care:** The committee discussed the historical context and ongoing concerns with the Partners in Care program, highlighting the need for fair competition and proper evaluation of grant programs.

4. Support of Bill 6-24

- **Description:** Discussion on Bill 6-24, which proposes a tax credit for disabled veterans with 50% or more disability, up to \$100,000 of income.
- **Points Discussed:**
 - Linda drafted a letter supporting the bill based on previous communications and support for similar tax credit bills.
 - Concerns were raised about the negative equity impact of the bill.
 - Suggestion to include a tax credit for renters to address equity issues.
 - Six pieces of written testimony were in support of the bill; none addressed equity issues.
 - Recommendations included decreasing the disability requirement and adjusting the income requirement to match the area median income.
 - Consensus was needed on whether to continue supporting the bill.
- **Decisions:**
 - Support the bill with the inclusion of a recommendation for a rental subsidy.
 - David to update, format, and distribute the letter for review and approval by June 20th.

5. Discussion of CoA Policy Priorities

- **Description:** Review and discussion of the Commission on Aging's (CoA) policy priorities for the upcoming period.
- **Points Discussed:**
 - Updated PowerPoint presentation on new suggestions for deciding operating budget priorities and advocacy priorities.
 - Public Policy Committee's role in reviewing and potentially adding to the priorities submitted by other committees.
 - Importance of presenting a clear and comprehensive agenda or set of goals.
 - The need to maintain the July meeting schedule to align with voting and organizing priorities.
- **Decisions:**
 - Stick to the July meeting for presentations.
 - Committees to prepare one-page abstracts of their top priorities, including both budget and advocacy issues.
 - Consideration of an intermingled list of budget and advocacy priorities.
 - Committees to submit initial lists of priorities in advance of the July Public Policy Committee meeting.

6. Process for Voting on Next Year's Budget Priorities

- **Description:** Discussion on the process for voting on budget priorities and ensuring clarity and engagement from all commissioners.
- **Points Discussed:**
 - Reviewing past voting systems and addressing issues of misunderstanding and lack of engagement.
 - Suggestions for a clearer and more inclusive voting process, such as using a penny allocation method.
 - Emphasizing the need for commissioners to understand the process and be involved in developing priorities.
 - Potential use of a report to summarize and present CoA priorities to different stakeholders.
- **Decisions:**
 - Develop a clear voting system and communicate it effectively to all commissioners.
 - Consider different formats for presenting priorities to various audiences.
 - Publish a comprehensive report on the CoA's priorities for distribution.

Action Items:

1. **David** to update, format, and distribute the support letter for Bill 6-24 by June 20th.
2. **Committees** to prepare one-page abstracts of their top priorities.
3. **Public Policy Committee** to review initial lists of priorities by the July meeting.
4. **Asha Hamilton** to be contacted for assistance with the voting system.
5. **Shawn Brennon** to be consulted for guidance on the priority development process.
6. **David** to update letter to Sen. Kramer and Del Cullison and work with **Janice** to draft cover letters to Sec. Roques, the County Council, the County Executive and a further

follow up letter to Dr. K. (The CoA will get approval from Leslie Frey prior to sending these letters).

Adjorn.