

**Commission on Aging
Public Policy Committee
February 13, 2025**

Attendees:

- **Commissioners:** Co-Chair Kate Stein, Co-Chair Morris Klein, Linda Bergofsky, Wayne Berman, Janice Zalen, Dixie Butler, Elizabeth Barnes, Betsy Carrier
- **Staff:** Peter Illig
- **Public:** N/A

Meeting Minutes:

- **Date/Time:** February 13, 2025, 10:00–11:30 AM
- **Platform:** Zoom
- **Focus Areas:** Nursing home inspections and OHCQ budget hearing, state legislation, county bills and actions.

Key Discussions Summary:

Minutes approved from January meeting.

Budget Hearing and OHCQ Accountability

- The PPC discusses the upcoming budget hearing for the Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) and their efforts to push for accountability regarding Hb. 429.
- Linda reports on the Tiger team's actions, including reaching out to delegates and sending emails to committee members.
- The group expresses frustration with OHCQ's performance and Dr. K's previous testimony.
- Kate suggests reaching out to reporters after the budget hearing to publicize the issue, which the group agrees to consider.

Improving Commission on Aging Testimony

- The meeting involved a discussion about the proper way to submit testimony and letters on behalf of the Commission on Aging.
- Kate expressed concern about the lack of organization listed in their testimony on the Medical Aid in Dying bill considered in 2024 and suggested that it would be better to submit as a commission rather than as a county.
- Peter suggested that the oversight was likely due to a misunderstanding and recommended using the Commission on Aging's letterhead for all communications.
- Betsy raised a concern about the process of submitting letters, which seemed to be unclear.
- The team agreed to continue using the Commission on Aging's letterhead and to find a more efficient way to submit their communications.

State Legislation

- The meeting discussed various topics, including the potential impact of federal funding freezes on inspections and the status of the Inspections Bill.
- There was also a discussion about the Job-Sharing Bill and Delegate Qi's Bill regarding CCRCs. The team agreed to draft a letter of support for the latter, with Morris taking the lead.
- The meeting also touched on the Medical Aid in Dying Bill, with Kate suggesting they should take action on it. Linda agreed to review the letter from the previous year and consider any updates.
- Janice discussed the importance of family councils in assisted living programs, noting that Montgomery County has a local ordinance mandating their existence. She clarified that the proposed state legislation encourages the establishment of family

councils but does not mandate them, as it's impossible to mandate family members' attendance.

- Janice agreed to write a letter of support for the proposed legislation.
- The team also discussed House Bill 1070, which requires the Maryland Department of Health to study the feasibility of installing and maintaining a telephone system in nursing home facilities, psychiatric facilities, and assisted living facilities. The team agreed to review the bill and consider supporting it.
- In the meeting, Linda and Kate discussed the process of submitting testimony for bills. Kate suggested that they could submit a favorable report for bills that are not directly related to seniors but still beneficial to the community.
- Linda expressed her struggle with understanding the process and the potential benefits of this approach.

County Legislation and Actions

- Kate also mentioned that the county had passed a U Visa bill and implemented a universal ban on plastic bags.

County Affordable Housing Initiatives and Strategies

- Kate discussed the progress of affordable housing initiatives, including the development of seven new projects and the introduction of the "More Housing Now" bill.
- She also mentioned the need for a comparative equity analysis of the new bill and the "Affordable Housing Strategies".
- Linda expressed her support for the expansion of the moderately priced dwelling unit program into Poolesville.
- The team agreed to consider supporting the "More Housing Now" bill and to potentially attend a public hearing on March 11th.

- Kate emphasized the need for a holistic approach to housing, considering not just quantity but also quality and location.
- Kate also expressed her opinion that approaches to the housing crisis should not simply strive to fill the need for housing but should also keep site of RESJ and environmental goals. In particular, Kate suggested applying RESJ analysis to proposed strategies, comparing the potential for different approaches to lead to a more racially integrated community, some redress of red lining, etc., and where there is more equal access to infrastructure and key resources
- Kate, Wayne, and Linda discussed the potential for building housing in a specific area near King Farm. Wayne expressed his support for the idea, noting that it could be a good start for many people, particularly in the workforce. However, Linda raised concerns about the unintended consequences of this development, particularly in relation to the expansion of the transfer station and the potential for more waste to be sent to the Dickerson incinerator. She also mentioned the county's plan to expand Route 28, 107, and 109 into four-lane highways, which could destroy the infrastructure of the Ag reserve. The group agreed to learn more about the situation before making a decision.

Expanding Infrastructure Funding Working Group, Infrastructure Planning, and Community Needs

- Kate proposes writing a letter regarding the county's new infrastructure funding working group. She suggests broadening the definition of infrastructure to include "soft infrastructure" like care services for older adults and emphasizing the need for diversity and public input in the group's composition.

- The group discusses the details of the working group's membership and goals, which currently focus on schools and transportation.
- Wayne agrees that broadening the scope is a good idea, and Kate offers to draft a letter for the group to review.
- The meeting focused on the importance of infrastructure planning, particularly in relation to community centers and primary care clinics. The group discussed the need for a more user-friendly approach to these facilities, with Linda emphasizing the importance of considering the needs of the community.
- The conversation also touched on the topic of housing, with Betsy expressing a desire for clearer directions on how to engage with the AIC committee on this issue.
- Wayne suggested that the AIC, villages, and the Commission on people with disabilities could work together to promote the Design for Life program.
- The group agreed that letters of support for this effort could be generated by the AIC and reviewed by the Public Policy Committee and the EC.

Updating Gilchrist Center Resources for Seniors

- In the meeting, Kate, Linda, Wayne, and Betsy discussed their notes from a previous meeting and the need for more comprehensive information to support older adults who are immigrants. They considered using the county's existing resources and updating them specifically for older adults.
- They also discussed the possibility of creating a video for distribution via Whatsapp and other channels, with Anna Maria potentially leading this effort.

- The team agreed to review the county's updated resources and provide feedback for further edits. They also discussed the need for information in multiple languages, starting with Spanish.
- The conversation ended with the team expressing eagerness to continue their work and prepare for upcoming public hearings.

Next steps

- Morris to draft brief testimony for HB 1454 (CCRC study bill).
- Janice to cross-check county and proposed state legislation for CCRC family councils and draft a letter of support for SB 751/HB 1291.
- Linda to review and update last year's testimony for the Elijah Cummings Medical Aid in Dying bill.
- Kate to draft a letter regarding the county's infrastructure funding working group, suggesting inclusion of care infrastructure and diversity considerations.
- Linda to draft a letter regarding the "More Housing NOW" initiative after attending the informational session on March 5th.
- Kate to attend the "More Housing NOW" informational session on February 27th.
- Immigration working group to review and update Gilchrist website information for older adults.
- Immigration working group to discuss creating a video for older immigrants at their next meeting.

The next meeting was scheduled for March 13th.

Adjourn