



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
& HUMAN SERVICES
**AGING & DISABILITIES
SERVICES**

**ADVOCACY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 1, 2025**

The Milwaukee County Aging Advocacy Committee convened in person at Kelly Senior Center on Friday, August 1, 2025. Members and attendees also joined the meeting virtually and by conference call.

Members Present:

Commissioner Brian Peters, *Chair*
Commissioner George Banda, *Vice-Chair*
Maureen Conrad
Sopheya Farrell
Kimberly King
Trina Koch
Paulette Maclin
Gary Mikolajczyk
Harold Oemig
Kathy Scott
Tom Suchecki
Commissioner Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.

Members Excused:

William Meunier

Milwaukee County Staff

Migdalia Pacheco Pacheco, DHHS
Emily Petersen, DHHS

Attendees from the Public

Derrick Canion, *ASL Interpreter*
Jill Kenehan-Krey, *ASL Interpreter*
Bennett Rucka
Rene Smith
Brook Stanley, *Milwaukee LGBT Community Center*

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Brian Peters called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. The AAA Advocacy and Policy Manager, Emily Petersen conducted the roll call. A quorum was present.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 6, 2025, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from the Advocacy Committee meeting on June 6, 2025, are not available; they will be reviewed at the September Advocacy Committee meeting.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

Chair Peters announced several upcoming events (For more information, see attached flyers):

- Senator Carpenter/Representative Kirsch Post Budget Townhall on August 9, 2025, at 12 p.m. at Greenfield Public Library (5310 W Layton Ave, Greenfield, WI 53220)
- County Executive Budget Townhalls
 - August 13, 2025, at Kosciuszko Community Center (in-person and virtual)
 - August 20, 2025, at Washington Park Senior Center (in-person only)
- Cooking Demo, Bailey Knutson, Registered Dietitian PT, at 10 a.m.
- Milwaukee County Executive, David Crowley, and Dr. Ben Weston Older Adult Health Roundtable
 - Monday, August 18, 2025, at 10:30 a.m., at Washington Park Senior Center
- Community Development Alliance Annual Conference: Protecting Aging Neighbors from Displacement
 - September 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at GATHER at Deer District (333 W Juneau Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53203)

IV. INTRODUCE NEW ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman Peters welcomed Kimberly King, a new member of the Advocacy Committee. Kimberly introduced herself as a retired sheriff's deputy from Milwaukee County and is currently a service coordinator at a HUD community.

V. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES

A. Federal Aging Policy

I. Federal Budget and Issues

- a. **Budget Reconciliation Update:** Ms. Petersen provided an update on federal budget issues, highlighting the changes and impacts of the "One Big Beautiful Bill" (reconciliation bill) on Medicaid, SNAP, and Medicare. She explained the modifications to work requirements, eligibility redeterminations, and the potential cuts to Medicare resulting from the bill.
- b. **FY2026 Budget Update:** The federal government is beginning the appropriations process for the fiscal year 2026, which involves passing 14 appropriations bills for various departments. The deadline for adopting the federal budget is September 30, 2025.

The committee responsible for the Department of Health and Human Services has approved a budget recommendation that includes increased funding for programs under the Older Americans Act, the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and the Social Security Administration. Senator Baldwin, a ranking member of the

committee, provided an update on the bipartisan recommendations, which also include restoring funding for AmeriCorps.

The proposed budget allocates \$116.6 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services, reflecting an increase of \$446 million. Notable funding increases within this budget include \$1.1 billion for senior nutrition programs, \$20 million for LIHEAP, \$594 million for the Social Security Administration, and \$1.25 billion for AmeriCorps.

The appropriations process will continue throughout the summer, with Congress required to finalize the budget for the president's signature.

Committee member Wilberg proposed sending a letter of support for Senator Baldwin's bipartisan initiative aimed at restoring and increasing funding for programs that benefit older adults, including Older Americans Act programs, the Social Security Administration, and AmeriCorps. The committee voted and approved the motion.

MOTION: To send a letter of support for Senator Baldwin's bipartisan initiative and support of the Health, Labor, and Health and Education Department's proposed budget

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda Moved, Conrad Second)

- i. **Support for Civil Legal Aid:** Ms. Petersen emphasized the significance of Legal Services Corporations in providing free civil legal aid to low-income individuals and older adults. She also discussed the potential impact of proposed budget cuts on these services. The committee voted to include support for funding legal services corporations in their policy platform.

MOTION: To include support for Civil Legal Aid to the Commission on Aging's Policy Platform

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Wilberg Moved, Suchecki Second)

- ii. **Support for AmeriCorps:** Ms. Petersen discussed the proposed budget cuts for AmeriCorps and their impact on senior-related programs, such as the Senior Companion program. The committee approved adding support for AmeriCorps funding to its policy platform.

MOTION: To include support for AmeriCorps to the Commission on Aging's Policy Platform

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda Moved, Mikolajczyk Second)

c. Older Americans Act Reauthorization – Senate HELP Press

Release: The reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) was

introduced in the Senate. This bill is usually bipartisan, but it faced challenges in passing through the House of Representatives last year. Although the bill successfully made it through the House, Senate, and full Congress, it was ultimately removed from the final budget due to external factors, including Elon Musk's influence on negotiations.

Currently, efforts are underway to reintroduce and pass the reauthorization, ensuring it includes provisions that preserve the independence of area agencies on aging, such as Milwaukee County's agency. This independence is essential for creating programs and services that cater to local needs. The committee continues to support this reauthorization as part of their policy platform. The reauthorization is already part of the Commission's policy platform, so no further action is needed currently.

II. Federal Regulations and Executive Orders

B. State Legislative Issues

I. State Budget & Legislation

- a. 2025-2027 State Budget Update – WAAN Update:** Ms. Petersen emphasized the key points from the recently adopted state budget. Notably, it includes increased funding for Medicaid programs, as well as higher rates for personal care services and home health care services. She underlined the significance of these increases considering the federal reconciliation bill.
- b. Review State Legislation Tracker:** Ms. Petersen emphasized that the bill removing eligibility requirements for the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Programs has successfully passed both the Senate and the Assembly and is now awaiting the governor's signature. The deadline for the governor to sign the bill is August 7th. Additionally, the low-income housing tax credit bill stipulates that 35% of the tax credits must be allocated to rural areas, which is slightly above the rural population percentage in the state. This ensures increased funding for rural communities. The tracker includes new information highlighted in the document, reflecting the latest legislative activities and updates. The governor has the authority to use line-item vetoes or make amendments to the bills, particularly concerning the budget. Once signed, the bills will either become law immediately or after a specified period if they are not vetoed.

II. Administrative Rules & Governor's Taskforces

No Report

III. Wisconsin Elections Commission Report – Barriers Faced by Voters with Disabilities and elderly Voters

Chair Peters discussed the report issued by the Wisconsin Elections Commission and noted the various repeated accessibility issues that arise at polling locations. He noted that he and Advocacy and Policy Manager Petersen both sit on the Disability Vote Coalition where the report is also being discussed.

C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues

- I. Milwaukee County Budget and Legislation:** The Advocacy Committee addressed concerns regarding the Milwaukee County budget, with a specific focus on the potential effects on future funding for senior centers and tax levy-supported services. Committee members are encouraged to attend the County Executive's budget hearings to advocate for ongoing support for the needs of older adults.
- II. Aging Items of Interest: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) Transportation Plan:** Ms. Petersen and Chair Peters discussed the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) as it updates the public transit, human services, and transportation coordination plans for each of the seven counties in Southeastern Wisconsin, including Milwaukee County. SEWRPC is seeking input on transportation services, particularly for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income populations. They will soon host an in-person workshop, with more information to come. For those unable to attend, there will also be an online survey available (Ms. Petersen will email the information to the Advocacy Committee). The committee approved submitting comments to SEWRPC advocating for improved transportation services for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

MOTION: To provide written comment on the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordination Plans.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda Moved, Mikolajczyk Second)

Reframing Aging Initiative: Advocacy Committee members discussed the importance of reframing aging to address ageism and promote better language when referring to older adults. Ms. Petersen mentioned the statewide Reframing Aging initiative and invited committee members to get involved. If you are interested, please contact me Petersen at

VI. 2025-2027 AGING AREA PLAN ADVOCACY GOALS REVIEW

- a. **Review and discuss 2025-2027 Aging Area Plan goals in the Advocacy category:** Chair Peters and Ms. Petersen reported that the Advocacy Committee is on track with the 2025-2027 Aging Area Plan Goals. Currently, nothing is outstanding or needing attention.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda Moved, Mikolajczyk Second)

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.. The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, September 5, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang
Executive Assistant