



## Advocacy Committee Meeting February 20, 2024

Advocacy Committee members convened virtually and in-person on February 20, 2024. Members and attendees joined the virtual meeting by video conference and conference call and the in-person location was held at Kelly Senior Center.

### **Members Present:**

Chair Brian Peters, *Commissioner*  
George Banda *Commissioner*  
Harold Omeig, *Vice Chair*  
Maureen Conrad  
Sopheya Farrell  
Gary Mikolajczyk  
John Griffith  
Sequanna Taylor

### **Staff Present:**

Clare O'Brien-DHHS  
Ortrilla Paris-DHHS  
Emily Petersen-DHHS  
Nina Yang-DHHS  
Vonda Nyang-DHHS

### **Members Excused:**

Maureen Fitzgerald  
Trina Koch  
William Meunier  
Janice Wilberg, *Commissioner*

### **Attendees from the Public**

Derrick Cainion, ASL Interpreter  
Jill Kenehan-Krey, ASL Interpreter  
Joe Crivello  
Rene Smith  
Tom Suchecki

## MINUTES

### **I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Brian Peters called the Advocacy Committee meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Emily Petersen, Advocacy and Policy Manager, DHHS, ADS, Aging Unit called the roll. A quorum was present.

### **II. Review and Approval of the January 16, 2023, Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes.**

**MOTION:** Accept the January 16, 2024, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes.

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda moved, Conrad second).

### **III. ELECTION OF ADVOCACY COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR**

Chair Peters solicited nominations for the position of Advocacy Committee Vice Chair. Advocacy Committee member Harold Omeig nominated himself for Vice Chair of the Advocacy Committee. There were no other nominations, so the election was conducted via unanimous consent.

**MOTION:** Harold Omeig for Vice Chair of the Advocacy Committee.

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent.

#### **IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES.**

a) Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) State Aging Advocacy Day.

Petersen asked the Committee Members to save the date of Tuesday May 14, 2024, for WAAN's Aging Advocacy Day in Madison, Wisconsin. All Milwaukee County older adult advocates are welcome to attend the event, including friends and family. Petersen will send out the survey so that we can plan our attendance and transportation for the event. WAAN will open registration for the event in March. Everyone will need to register through the survey and register with WAAN to attend the event.

b) City of Milwaukee Vision Zero Community Meeting

Commissioner Peters gave an update on the City of Milwaukee Vision Zero Community Meeting, which will be held on February 27, 2024, at the Mitchell Street Library from 4:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. The public meeting will gather input on solutions to promote traffic calming and reckless driving (Spanish translation provided).

#### **V. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS**

Petersen recommended skipping this item so that the Committee has enough time to consider action items. Chair Peters agreed. The Advocacy Committee will discuss this item at the March 19, 2024, meeting.

#### **VI. LEGISLATIVE & POLICY UPDATES**

a.) Federal Aging Policy

i. Federal Budget & Issues:

Petersen stated that the next consideration of the federal budget is March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup>. It is not certain what will be included in these final discussions.

1) Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Status Updates:

Petersen discussed MIPPA funding, which is Medicare outreach services for patients and providers. Petersen reported national partners are optimistic that the funding for this program will make it into the budget. We will know more by the March funding deadline.

2) Affordable Connectivity Program: Petersen stated that the Affordable Connectivity Program, which provides subsidized internet service for certain individuals, is winding down due to expiration of funding. Once the program ends, those receiving the discount will return to paying full price for their service. A

Federal bill is currently being negotiated to extend the program through the rest of 2024, giving it momentum for future funding in subsequent years. The bill is sponsored by Senators JD Vance from Ohio and Peter Welch from Vermont. Petersen sent the policy brief to the Committee prior to the meeting that was put together by the National Counties Association with additional details. Senator Tammy Baldwin has been a strong supporter of broadband in Wisconsin and may be a proponent of this bill too.

**MOTION:** Support Senate Bill 3565 and House Resolution 6929.

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Mikolajczyk moved, Banda second).

Caregiver Tax Credit: Petersen Senate Bill 1670 and House Resolution 3321: the Credit for Caring Act. This is a bipartisan bill that provides an annual \$5,000 federal tax credit for unpaid family caregivers. This tax credit allows caregivers to deduct some caregiving expenses at their annual tax fillings. The bill is for eligible family caregivers, not those employed by agencies. The term “family caregiver” doesn’t have to be a family relative but can be a neighbor or friend that provides caregiving services. At the end of the year, eligible caregivers can deduct up to \$5000 of out-of-pocket caregiving expenses. The Committee discussed whether this bill would benefit individuals who are not required to file taxes because they do not meet the income threshold where they would be required to do so. Commissioner Behar stated that tax credits are only beneficial to those who make enough money to file taxes and those who’s income is high enough to benefit from an additional \$5,000 offset. The Committee discussed whether this bill would be beneficial for family caregivers. Petersen stated that this bill would not solve the financial burden of all family caregivers, however some would see benefit from this tax credit. Petersen said that the Committee can still support the bill for the benefits it would provide to some members of our community, even though it is not a cure all.

**MOTION:** Support Senate Bill 1670 and House Resolution 3321.

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Mikolajczyk moved, Banda second, Peters abstained).

- ii. Federal Regulations & Executive Orders
- b.) State Legislative Issues
  - i. State Budget & Legislation
    - 1) Review Legislation Tracker

The Committee did not have time to review updates to State Legislation and will take this item up at the March 19, 2024, Committee meeting.

- ii. Administrative Rules & Governor's Task Forces
- c) Milwaukee County Legislative Issues
  - i. Milwaukee County Budget & Legislation
  - ii. Aging Items of Interest

**VII. 2024 Policy Priorities Discussion.**

- a) Review 2023 Policy Priorities Document.
- b) Discuss changes for 2024 document.

The Committee reviewed the 2023 Policy Priorities Document and worked through it to make updates and changes for 2024. This discussion was lengthy and took up much of the meeting (about one hour total). The Committee made updates to the local, state, and federal policy priorities. The following updates were made:

**Federal Policy Priorities:**

- Expand the provisions underneath the affordable housing priority to include funding from the full spectrum of housing programs under Section 202 that are available to older adults.
- Include a provision in this section that advocates for funding and policy change to supports family caregivers.
- Add the language "funding and access" to bullet point #3 about community life supports.

**State Policy Priorities:**

- Remove priorities #2 and #9 that relate to MCO acquisition and the Fair Deal as they are no longer relevant.
- Include language to bullet #4 about transportation to indicate that we are advocating for a fully funded transportation system (fixed route and specialized).
- Expand advocacy goals for caregivers at state level to include family caregivers and full spectrum of policy options to address caregiver crisis.
- Add language to policy goal about APS to indicate opposition to any law change that removes legal power from APS.
- Generalize statement around Wisconsin State Budget to remove surplus language and add language advocating for larger portion of State Budget be directed to issues of aging.

**Local Policy Priorities:**

- Revise policy provision on senior centers to update committee name, include advocacy for non-County-owned Senior Centers, and ask for increased funding for center improvements.

**MOTION:** Approve the 2024 Commission on Aging Policy Priorities as discussed.

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Conrad first, Banda second).

**VIII. Adjournment.**

The Advocacy Committee adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

**MOTION:** Adjournment to March 19, 2024.

**ACTION:** The motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Oemig first, Banda second).

Respectfully submitted,

Ortrially Paris  
Clerical Assistant 1