



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

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MIUTES JUNE 6, 2025

The Milwaukee County Aging Advocacy Committee convened in person at the Wilson Park Senior Center on Friday, June 6, 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
Paulette Maclin
Harold Oemig
Kathy Scott
Tom Suchecki
Commissioner Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.

Members Excused:

Sopheya Farrell
Gary Mikolajczyk
Trina Koch
William Meunier

Milwaukee County Staff

Jill Knight, DHHS
Migdalia Pacheco, DHHS
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*
Emily Petersen, *DHHS*
Deidra Williams, *DHHS*

Attendees from the Public

Kimberly King
Jill Kenehan-Krey, *ASL Interpreter*
Steph Zito, *ASL Interpreter*

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, AAA Advocacy and Policy Manager, conducted the roll call. A quorum was present.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE MAY 2, 2025, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the May 2, 2025, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes

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

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

A. Are you Prepared? Conference: Registration is now open for the “Are You Prepared” conference, scheduled for Saturday, June 28, 2025, at Alverno

College. This all-day event will focus on end-of-life preparedness, including planning sessions on advance care directives, funeral planning, and probate court procedures. If you are interested in attending, please register in advance to help us with meal counts and breakout session planning, as food will be provided. For more details, please refer to the attached flyer.).

B. Legislative Town Halls: Join us for a State Budget Townhall meeting hosted by Wisconsin State Senator Chris Larson, representing District 7. The event will feature Representatives Krista McGee and Ryan Clancy. It will take place **on June 11, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.** at the South Shore Park Pavilion. For more details, please refer to the attached flyer.

IV. INTRODUCE NEW ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Emily Petersen introduced two new members to the meeting. Tom Suchecki and Kathy Scott, new members of the Advocacy Committee, introduced themselves. Mr. Suchecki has been on the Wellness Committee for two years and wanted to become more involved. Ms. Scott, from Milwaukee, works as a clinical monitor for Abbott and aims to advocate for others and share important information with her church members.

V. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES

A. Federal Aging Policy

I. Federal Budget and Issues

- a. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Final Status Update:** Ms. Petersen provided updates on the federal budget process, specifically regarding two key components: the Budget Reconciliation Bill and the regular Budget Appropriations Process. The reconciliation bill aims to reduce the federal debt and has passed in the House; it is now headed to the Senate, where it may undergo significant changes. The proposed cuts to Medicaid are unpopular, and the cuts to Medicare could be highly controversial.

Additionally, the Administration for Community Living has proposed a reorganization, revised to establish a new Administration for Children, Families, and Communities. This change aims to keep the programs for older Americans intact but may result in a reduction of staff. Ms. Petersen concluded that, thanks to strong advocacy efforts, the President's budget proposal maintains level funding for Older Americans Act programs.

Budget reconciliation bill. Congress used to do the mandatory bills Medicaid, Social Security and Medicare. Cuts are due by July 4, 2025.

- b. Impact of SNAP Cuts on Wisconsin:** The proposed cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Wisconsin could significantly impact residents. A Wisconsin Department of

Health Services analysis shows that Milwaukee County receives \$519 million in SNAP benefits, highlighting the program's crucial role in food security.

One primary concern is the expansion of work requirements, which may particularly affect adults aged 54 to 65, making it harder for them to access essential food resources. Additionally, cuts could impact the Senior Stock Box program, further diminishing food support for older adults and individuals with limited incomes.

The analysis also outlines the broader economic impact across different counties, emphasizing the vital importance of SNAP benefits and the potential adverse effects of the proposed cuts on food security in the state. Overall, these proposed changes could have serious consequences for Wisconsin residents, especially older adults and those with limited incomes.

- c. Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act:** The Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act, introduced by Senators Baldwin and Grassley, aims to combat age discrimination in the workforce. This legislation seeks to enhance protections for older workers by imposing stricter penalties on employers who make negative employment decisions based on age. The bill is significant as more individuals aged 60 and older remain in the workforce, often facing challenges in finding employment due to age-related biases.

The Act has garnered bipartisan support, with co-sponsors from both political parties, reflecting a broad consensus on the need to safeguard older workers from discrimination. This bill is especially timely, as financial pressures, such as changes to Medicaid and SNAP, may compel more older adults to seek employment, making the protections offered by this legislation even more crucial. Overall, the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act represents a significant step forward in ensuring fair treatment for older employees, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable workforce.

MOTION: To support the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act and add it to the Commission on Aging's 2025 Policy Priorities.

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

II. Federal Regulations and Executive Orders

B. State Legislative Issues

I. State Budget & Legislation

- a. **2025-2027 State Budget Update:** Ms. Petersen provided a detailed update on the state budget process, highlighting key items that the Joint Committee on Finance either removed or retained. She pointed out the removal of several initiatives related to aging, which included funding for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, complete Medicaid expansion, and increases for home-delivered meals, as well as home and community-based services.

On a positive note, she mentioned that some valuable developments were retained, such as funding for specialized transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities, as well as an increase in funding for adult protective services. Emily also discussed ongoing efforts to secure standalone legislation for falls prevention programs and potential changes to revenue sharing with the court system and real estate transfer fees. The increase to farmers market voucher and Home and community base programs were removed. And the evidence-based programming funding and long-term care ombudsman program were removed (Page 3).

- b. **Review State Legislation Tracker:** The Legislation Tracker highlights several vital bills and resolutions related to aging and disability services. Notably, the financial eligibility criteria for the Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Program have advanced, receiving unanimous approval from both the Senate and Assembly committees, which allows it to move forward for a full vote. Additionally, former commissioner and state representative Sequanna Taylor has introduced a resolution to designate May as Older Americans Month, with state senator Dora Drake sponsoring it in the Senate. These legislative efforts demonstrate ongoing advocacy to support older adults and caregivers, addressing critical needs and recognizing the contributions of older Americans.
- c. **WAAN Aging Advocacy Day Discussion and Follow-up:** Ms. Petersen reported on the success of Advocacy Day, where a bill received unanimous approval from both the Senate and Assembly Committees, making it eligible for full votes in both chambers with bipartisan support. She also highlighted that former Commissioner Sequanna Taylor had introduced May as Older Americans Month at the state level, with Senator Drake serving as the Senate sponsor. The Advocacy Committee discussed the achievements of Aging Advocacy Day, noting that they visited 100% of state senators and 75% of state representatives. Due to logistical challenges, they plan to return to hosting the event every other year.

II. Administrative Rules & Governor's Taskforces

C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues

- I. **Milwaukee County Budget and Legislation:** Commissioner Wilberg discussed the Milwaukee County 2026 budget, highlighting a 5% reduction in the tax levy, amounting to approximately \$130,000 for aging services. This cut is partially offset by a \$1.5 million investment in a new senior center at the Bucyrus Erie site in South Milwaukee, as well as a \$3 million federal earmark and a \$2 million county investment for a new Montgomery senior center. The group decided not to pursue additional tax levy requests this year due to these significant investments. However, they will continue to monitor budget developments through executive and county board hearings.

II. Aging Items of Interest

VI. 2025-2027 AGING AREA PLAN ADVOCACY GOALS REVIEW

Ms. Petersen's review of the area plan goals highlighted significant progress in several key areas. The senior leadership program successfully engaged participants, many of whom expressed interest in advocacy roles and committee involvement. Efforts to improve website accessibility and functionality are ongoing, although progress has been slower due to limited control over Milwaukee County's website. Overall, the goals are being met, with notable success in increasing representation in legislative districts and involving senior leaders in advocacy activities. The team continues to monitor these goals and provide quarterly reports to ensure ongoing progress.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn.

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m. The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, August 1, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang
Executive Assistant