



Advocacy Committee November 6, 2023

Advocacy Committee members convened virtually on Monday November 6, 2023. Members and attendees joined the virtual meeting by video conference and conference call.

Members Present:

Chair Elliott Moeser, Commissioner
Vice-Chair Share Jackson
John Griffith, Commissioner
Cindy Van Vreede, Commissioner
Supervisor Sequanna Taylor
Sopheya Farrell
Harold Oemig

Members Excused:

T. R. Edwards
Maureen Fitzgerald
Trina Koch
William Meunier
Gary Mikolajczyk
Paul Pedersen

Staff Present:

Christel Colorado, DHHS
Jill Knight, DHHS
Shakita LaGrant, DHHS
Clare O'Brien, DHHS
Ortrialla Paris, DHHS
Emily Petersen, DHHS
Carrie Vallejo, DHHS
Nina Yang, DHHS

Attendees from the Public:

Kyle Ashley, Office of Governor Evers
George Banda, Commissioner
Gloria Miller, Commissioner
Brian Peters, Commissioner
Annie Gonring, Legal Action of WI
Maureen Conrad
Kevin Dorr
Sandy Janzer
Nancy Simuel
Eve Dicker Eiseman, ASL Interpreter
Jen Hayes, ASL Interpreter

MINUTES

I. Call to Order and Roll:

Chair Elliot Moeser called the Advocacy Committee meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Emily Petersen, Advocacy and Policy Manager, DHHS, ADS, Aging Unit, called the roll. A quorum was present.

II. Review and Approval of the Monday September 11, 2023, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes:

MOTION: Vice-Chair Jackson moved to approve the September 11, 2023 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Jackson moved, Griffith second).

III. Announcements and Advocacy Opportunities:

1. **Department of Labor Section 14(C) Subminimum Wage Stakeholder Engagement Session:** The Department of Labor is currently evaluating Section 14(C) of the Subminimum Wage Stakeholder law. Before they make any proposed changes to the law, they are holding an engagement session to hear from people who might want to provide input on this law, particularly those who could be impacted by it, including individuals with a disability or who's disability might cause reduced productivity at work. Currently, this portion of law states that employers can apply for a waiver from the Federal Government to pay certain individuals subminimum wages if their disability results in reduced productivity. Emily shared the link and the attachment so interested individuals can sign up for the engagement session on November 15, 2023 from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM.
2. **National Family Caregiver Support Month:** Kayla Steinke, Caregiver Support Coordinator, DHHS, ADS, Aging Unit, wanted to remind the committee that it is National Family Caregiver Month. Kayla shared that there are many upcoming events this month. On November 11, 2023, ADS is partnering with the Alzheimer's Association on their "Caring for the Caregiver" event. County Executive David Crowley will be in attendance to present a proclamation for National Family Caregiver Month. There will also be a virtual presentation through the Milwaukee Recreation Department that all are invited to join. Emily included a flyer that highlights some of the events that will be happening throughout the month. The purpose of this month is to celebrate caregivers and to make sure that they are connected to the important resources and supports that are available to them as they take on this critical work. In addition, Emily highlighted the successful press conference hosted by the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) and AARP on November 14th at the State Capitol encouraging the reintroduction of the CARE Act. This critical piece of legislation will support caregivers across the State of Wisconsin through improving communication between medical providers, patients, and their caregivers. Kayla stated that she is looking forward to partnering with the Advocacy Committee to plan actions and priorities in 2024 to really help meet the needs of family caregivers.

- ### **IV. Report on the October 27, 2023 Commission on Aging Meeting:** Emily Petersen gave an update on the October 27, 2023 Commission on Aging Meeting. The Advocacy Committee forwarded two items to the Commission on Aging. The first was to send a letter in support of additional Older Americans Act

Funding to our Federal Congressional delegation. The second was to draft and submit comments in support of the proposed Nursing Home Staffing rules proposed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The Commission on Aging laid over both items to the next meeting because there was no one available to advance those motions.

V. Update on Action Items (Information/Discussion)

- a) Older Americans Act Funding Advocacy Letter:** Chair Moeser stated that the draft letter supported by the Advocacy Committee was approved by the Executive Committee and sent out to all of Milwaukee County's Congressional representatives. The letter emphasizes three specific areas of priority: IIIB Supportive Services and Centers IIIC Home Delivered Meals, and IIIE Family Caregiver Support. Emily stated that the reason the letter went to the Executive Committee for approval, despite being laid over by the Commission on Aging, is because the issue became urgent. Our national partner, USAging, notified us that Congress may take up funding for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) budget on November 13th. Therefore, we thought it was best to ensure that the letter be sent as soon as possible. Emily stated that the final letter is attached to the agenda and was sent out last week with the meeting materials.
- b) CMS Nursing Home Staffing Rule Proposal Comment:** Emily stated she drafted the letter and incorporated the feedback provided by the Advocacy Committee. It was submitted by the deadline. The final comment is attached to the agenda. It reflects broad support for increasing staffing requirements at nursing home facilities but asks that the requirements go even further than the initial recommendation.
- c) Governor Evers response to Commission on Aging Ageism Letter:** Chair Moeser stated that Governor Evers has responded to the Commission on Aging's letter regarding ageism with a well-written letter. Kyle Ashley, the Director of Governor Evers' Milwaukee Office, asked the Committee that he would be able to take any questions or concerns from the Committee back to the Governor's staff for further review. Maureen Conrad asked for further information about the Governor's program, which appropriated money to train Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and what the training requirements will be for those workers. Commissioner Griffith expressed three areas of concerns. First is the lack of sufficient ombudsmen to monitor long-term care facilities. Commissioner Griffith supports expanded duties for ombudsmen that would have them monitor staff, facility ownership, referrals, conflicts of interest, and the full picture of these facilities. The second concern is mental health and inadequate services to address mental health needs for older adults. The final concern is the cost of cross-cultural training and cross-cultural competency for individuals who are working in long-term care facilities. Chair Moeser

expressed his concern with discrimination against the aging. He stated that seniors are often looked at as having no use in society because of their age, but that seniors are incredibly important in the community and can provide intergenerational perspective. Director Ashley stated that he took notes on all of the Committee's concerns and will get back to Emily when he has answers.

- d) **Milwaukee County mental health services and program status:** At the Commission on Aging meeting, this motion was referred to the Advisory Council for further review since they are currently working on this issue. Commissioner Griffith will monitor progress on this issue at the Advisory Council and report back to the Advocacy Committee. Commissioner Griffith would like to send out thank you letters to the County Supervisors that supported increased funding for the Aging budget and the County Executive for his inclusion of it in his budget.

VI. Legislative & Policy Updates (Discussion/Action)

- a) **Federal Aging Policy:** Emily mentioned the importance of contacting your Federal Representative about Older Americans Act funding before they take up the DHHS budget on November 13th. As a reminder, the Older Americans Act is a decades-old Federal law that outlines the programs and services for older adults throughout the Country, as operated by state and local aging units. It is administered by the Association for Community Living and funded through DHHS. This funding goes to Area Agencies on Aging, of which Milwaukee County is one. We use this funding to carry out our program and services, including supportive services and centers, like senior centers, or counseling services and telephone reassurance services. It also includes other services, such as transportation and congregate and home-delivered meals. There are also other categories of funding that are included in the Older Americans Act that are very important to sustain our programs and services.
- b) **State Legislative Issues:** Emily updated the Advocacy Committee on two bills that were discussed at the last meeting. One was the bill to fund Healthy Aging Grants. They have not taken action on either the Assembly or Senate version of that bill yet, but we anticipate that they will take it up before the end of this session. The other bill that was discussed was regarding 100-day refills for Senior Care participants. The Senate version of this bill already passed and messaged to the Assembly. We are waiting for the Assembly to take a full vote on it. Emily stated that both bills will likely be taken up in the first couple months of 2024. Emily highlighted an additional bill that may be of concern to older adults, AB-572. This bill relates to

absentee voting in residential care facilities. Residents in a care facility would have their on-file contacts notified if they requested an absentee ballot. Their contacts would also be notified if a special voting deputy was present at the facility for the purposes of administering absentee voting. Residents would not have the ability to decline this notification. Emily stated she will send out more information on this bill.

- c) **Milwaukee County Legislative Issues:** Supervisor Taylor gave an update on the 2024 Milwaukee County budget. The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors Committee on Finance approved an amendment to include an additional \$100,000 to the Aging budget, as advocated for by the Advocacy Committee. This item will go before the County Board this Thursday. There will also be an update on new fitness equipment at the senior centers. Director Daniel Idzikowski has the list of which centers will be getting which equipment.

VII. Discussion and Potential Action Items:

- i. **Comment on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Nondiscrimination because of Disability Proposed Rule (changes to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:)** Emily stated that, attached to the agenda, there is a draft comment responding to the proposed changes to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Department of Health and Human Services is working to provide clearer guidelines on ensuring that programs receiving federal funds do not discriminate against any participants due to their disability. Emily stated that the rule is broken up into different categories changes, including medical treatment and mobile accessibility. Emily stated that the comment also includes feedback on how the process of filing a discrimination complaint can be simplified. Harold Oemig suggested that the draft comments be amended to include suggestions related to the repeal of Section 14(C) of the Subminimum Wage law. Because the Section 14(C) changes are not available for comment yet, this provides an opportunity to still share our feedback on those potential rule changes.

MOTION: Commissioner Griffith moved approval of the comment related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as drafted and with the updates recommended by the Committee.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Griffith moved, Van Vreede second).

VIII. Advocacy Chair Report

Vice-Chair Sharon Jackson informed the Advocacy Committee that she is resigning from her position as Vice-Chair and stepping down from the Advocacy Committee due to her personal obligations. Commissioner Griffith's term on the Commission on Aging is expiring at the end of November, but he will still remain a member of the Advocacy Committee. In addition, Commissioner Moeser stated that his term as Commissioner was also expiring at the end of November. As such, he will no longer be able to serve on the Advocacy Committee.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Chair Moeser moved adjournment of the meeting at 4:40 PM.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Jackson moved, Van Vreede second).

Respectfully submitted,

Ortrialla Paris
Clerical Assistant 1