

Milwaukee County Commission on Aging | Advocacy Committee  
Proposed 2025 County Budget Priorities  
Draft

Overall Priority: Support for increases to the Area Agency on Aging budget that supplement programming and services for older adults in the areas of specialized transportation, evidence-based wellness, caregiving, and nutrition.

### **Specialized Transportation**

#### *Current Status:*

Funding for specialized transportation is a combination of Older Americans Act funds (3B), State 85.21 grant funds, County BCA, and Older Americans Act American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. ARPA funds expire at the end of September 2024. In 2024, **\$84,465** in ARPA funds were used to fulfill the total spending on older adult transportation needs. The Milwaukee County AAA received a cut of more than **\$16,000** in State 85.21 funds due to the formula that distributes the overall funding for specialized transportation in Wisconsin. Thus, at least **\$101,000** is needed to sustain transportation services at the current level in future years.

### **Evidence-Based Wellness**

#### *Current Status:*

Funding for evidence-based wellness programs (3D) is the category with the least growth year-over-year out of all the Older Americans Act program areas. These programs received a very modest increase in the 2024 Federal budget, but the proposed 2025 Federal budget funds them at the same 2024 levels. We know that funding at the same levels is the same as receiving a cut in funding due to inflation and the continued demand for these life-sustaining services. In addition, State support for physical activity programs, such as the Falls Free Wisconsin initiative supported by the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging has gone unfunded in the most recent biennial budget (\$378,000 total of which Milwaukee County benefits from a portion of these dollars/programs). At least **\$15,000** in support will be needed to fill gaps in 3D funding, expand our blood pressure monitor program in senior centers, and continue to license our evidence-based health promotion programs.

### **Caregiving**

#### *Current Status:*

Paid and family caregiving is a critical issue in the community. Since bringing this program in-house, our caregiver coordinator team has been able to support families across the County in receiving training, respite, support services, and education. This team, currently staffed with two professionals, will soon grow to three to address the growing needs of our area. With increased staff capacity, there can be additional focus on grant applications, seeking additional funding opportunities, and advocacy, in addition to the current slate of responsibilities. Tax levy in the amount of **\$67,000** can support this additional staff position, while state and federal funding can remain allocated on services and programs that directly support caregivers.

### **Nutrition**

#### *Current Status:*

Similar to other programs and services, the senior dining program was aided by COVID relief funds, which allowed expansion of the program into exciting areas. The Dine Out program was one of the most successful avenues that the nutrition program expanded into over the past few years and continues to

draw in new participants to the senior dining program and our other supportive services. Since inception, the Dine Out program has brought in 136 new participants, 86 percent of which are people of color. Minority-owned restaurants in the community also benefit from this partnership and reach out to be included but funding limitations prevent further expansion. Current sites are also starting to reach capacity. Funding in the amount of **\$100,000** would be a positive step towards the continued expansion of the Dine Out program into additional locations and increased diners.