



ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MAY 3, 2024

The Milwaukee County Aging Advocacy Committee convened virtually on Friday, May 3, 2024. Members and attendees joined the meeting virtually and by conference call.

Members Present:

Commissioner Brian Peters, *Chair*
Harold Oemig, *Vice-Chair*
Maureen Conrad
Sopheya Farrell
John Griffith
County Supervisor Sequanna Taylor

Members Excused:

Commissioner George Banda
Commissioner Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.
Trina Koch
William Meunier
Gary Mikolajczyk

Milwaukee County Staff

Jill Knight, *DHHS*
Carrie Koss Vallejo, *DHHS*
Bailey Knutson, *DHHS*
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*
Emily Petersen, *DHHS*

Attendees from the Public

Commissioner Gloria Miller
Christie Carter, *LGBT Community Center*
Joe Crivello
Debra Gorra Barash, *ASL Interpreter*
Donna Reiter Brandwein, *ASL Interpreter*

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Brian Peters called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Emily Petersen, AAA Advocacy and Policy Manager, took the roll call. A quorum was not present at the time the roll was called, but appeared shortly thereafter.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 24, 2024, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To lay over the April 24, 2024, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes to the next meeting for approval.

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

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) State Aging Advocacy Day (Save the Date!): Chairman Peters informed the Committee that the WAAN State Aging

Advocacy Day is May 14, 2024. He has signed up to attend and hopes other members will attend as well. By the end of business today, Ms. Petersen needs to hear from Committee members who have yet to sign up but are planning on attending so she can book the transportation now. They look forward to seeing everyone there.

IV. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS

- a) **Communication to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services regarding changes to the Emergency Food Assistance Program:** The Commission on Aging declined to take up this item at its April meeting, as it is waiting for additional information from other partner groups about the impact on the community these changes will bring before taking a final stance and voting on it. Ms. Petersen informed the Committee that they have a few months before the Emergency Food Assistance program changes will go into effect, so no letter was drafted for this item. After receiving the additional information, she will inform the Advocacy Committee of the Commission's decision to move forward with a vote.

- c) **Communication regarding support for Wisconsin State Park, Forest, Recreations Area Lifetime Admission Passes for Older Adults:** Ms. Petersen informed the Advocacy Committee that since their last meeting, she could not send a formal communication on the position that the Advocacy Committee took regarding the Wisconsin State Park Forest and Recreation Area Lifetime admission passes. She assured the Committee they still had time to submit the letter to the state legislators asking them to consider this item for the next biennial budget. Ms. Petersen will have an update on this item for the Committee in June.

V. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICE UPDATES

A. Federal Aging Policy

a) Federal Budget and Issues

- i. **Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act:** The new Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act bill, co-sponsored by several parties, including Senator Tammy Baldwin, aligns with the Advocacy Committee's adopted policy priorities for this year, including supporting both paid and family caregivers. Senator Baldwin is one of the primary co-sponsors of the bill, and Senator Bob Casey is its main sponsor. The bill is still in the drafting process, so no text is available, but a summary was provided. This bill will study opportunities to support individuals who live in group homes, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities, and other long-term care facilities, including those who provide care to individuals living in their homes (unpaid and paid caregivers). Ms. Petersen read the summary to the

Advocacy Committee and informed them that there is a log of long-term care organizations and other healthcare organizations endorsing this bill. Chairman Peters requested the Committee wait to receive the full text of the bill before deciding if they want to support it.

Vice-Chair Oemig asked how the provisions of the bill would be funded. Ms. Petersen reiterated that they have yet to release the bill text, so the funding source is not yet stated. She thinks it might be through Medicaid reimbursement but will update the Advocacy Committee on the finalized bill as soon as it is released. The Advocacy Committee discussed some of their concerns about caregivers not being adequately trained and not having enough experience and knowledge to do the job. The caregiver position has a lot of turnovers because the pay is so low that it's hard to keep workers in it. Also, some caregivers who temp agencies hire have convictions on their records. They want training institutions to create a pathway for caregivers to become a one-year licensed nurse.

There was a suggestion to have a caregiver tax credit for individuals providing care for a family member. Also, to work with the colleges and universities to see if their educational program can offer credits to students who would be a caregiver.

- ii. **Reauthorization of Older Americans Act:** This item is on the agenda under Potential Action Items as the Committee needs to set priorities for the reauthorization of the Older American Act.

b) Federal Regulations and Executive Orders

- i. **Final Nursing Home Staffing Standards Regulation:** The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized the Nursing Home Staffing Standard. Ms. Petersen reminded the Advocacy Committee that they submitted a letter supporting an increase in the minimum staffing standards and long-term care facilities. Some legislators attempted to stop the implementation of the recommended staffing standards but were unsuccessful. The Administration moved forward with publishing and implementing its final recommendations. She attached a document of their final recommendations and highlighted some changes.

The Administration increased the number of nursing staffing hours per resident to 3.48 hrs. a day, which each resident should receive for indirect nursing hours for Registered Nurses (RNs) and limited practitioner nurses (LPNs). They should also receive at least half an hour of end care, an increase from the old standards. Also, there is a

new requirement that each long-term care facility must have an RN on site all day, 24 hours a day. There is time for facilities to implement the latest standards. However, there is quite a concern from facilities located in rural areas, as they need help recruiting RN care and remaining compliant with the latest standards.

B. State Legislative Issues

- a) **State and Budget Legislation:** Currently, there are no updates on the State and Budget Legislation.
- b) **Administrative Rules and Governor's Task Forces Issue:** The Governor created a task force to bolster the state's healthcare workforce by increasing the number of individuals working in healthcare and retaining those workers by brainstorming strategies to increase compensation, getting people interested in the career, and finding new ways to improve patient care. Ms. Petersen informed the Committee that there is a website that you can visit to see the workforce's updates, meeting dates, and discussions. Janet Zander from the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) provides these updates. The meetings are open to the public if you want to attend; they are streamed online so that you can watch them on your computer. There is a meeting coming up in Milwaukee in June. Ms. Petersen provided the information in the chat feature.

Ms. Conrad asked about the progress of the program that the Governor had funded with \$10,000 to support CNA training. Ms. Petersen hasn't received any updates but will check into this request and report back. Chair Peters will investigate having someone from the Committee provide public comment on this topic to the workforce.

C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues

- a) **Milwaukee County Budget and Legislation**
 - i. **Request from Commission on Aging to Craft the 2025 County Budget Policy Priorities:** Ms. Petersen contacted all Committees and Councils to see if they needed additional funding or support for the programs and services, they oversee but hasn't heard back from anyone. However, based on public feedback and budget feedback from Matt Fortman, the Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Administrator, the aging unit has some information related to needed budget increases. Mr. Fortman provided information on previous questions asked by the Advocacy Committee. The tax levy base amount that the Aging Unit receives for programs and services without the additional allocation provided in 2024 is **\$1.8 million**. Last year, an additional allocation of \$270,000 in tax levy was provided,

which totaled \$2.114 million. Most of the AAA's funding comes from state and federal funding.

Ms. Petersen said that the Aging Unit received funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for Older American Act (OAA) programs and services. The first bill provided funding for all communities across Wisconsin. The second bill was just for Milwaukee County, in which the aging unit received \$1.6 million in ARPA funding for all aging programs and services that the AAA must expend by September 30, 2024. To continue to support those programs and services, the AAA must identify other funding, or they will have to scale back on the financing for those programs and services. An example of one of the new programs was the culturally guided transit tours for older adults to see the county's cultural facilities (Domes, Zoo, etc.).

The Advocacy Committee discussed that the aging population is growing statewide. The younger generations are moving to the suburbs, and the older populations are moving into the city to take advantage of public transportation, as many want to avoid driving. The demographics of the state of Wisconsin were also discussed, as compared to other counties. Milwaukee County's demographics continue to be mainly a younger population. However, the aging population is growing statewide, and generational changes are showing on the demographical maps of the state and, mainly, in Milwaukee County.

She also discussed a \$16,000 reduction in transportation funding and the reduced impacts on the meal programs affected by increased meal costs and other changes with the reauthorization of the OAA. Also, the county taking over the caregiving program rather than contracting out for those services increases the cost. She also discussed the need for funding for evidence-based programs.

The state legislature declined to fund the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA), which funds evidence-based wellness programs at the local level. The Committee has identified four issues for them to focus on: transportation, evidence-based wellness programs, caregiver support programs, and nutrition programs. Chair Peters requested Ms. Petersen ask the coordinators for funding numbers on the focus items and provide that information to the Committee.

b) Aging Items of Interest

Currently, there are no aging items of interest to discuss.

VI. POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS

- a) **Older Americans Act Reauthorization priorities:** The Advocacy Committee needs to set priorities for the Older Americans Act Reauthorization before September. The Committee reviewed and discussed the OAA document provided by USAging. Ms. Petersen informed the Committee of what reauthorization bills, policies, and budget bills are so they could start structuring their recommendations. The reauthorization bill covers all title areas of the Older Americans Act. Ms. Petersen provided the recommendations from USAging as a starting point for the Committee to work from. The Committee can decide if they want to support those recommendations or to add/create some of their own recommendations.

The Committee discussed that the reauthorization should not include the addition of any programs or services without any funding attached. The Committee also discussed endorsing the recommendations that USAging put forth. They will consider whether to include any other additional recommendations at a future meeting.

- b) **2025 County Budget priorities:** This item was discussed earlier in the meeting under Item #5. There was no action taken on this topic at today's meeting, but it will be considered at a later meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT: MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:31 a.m.

MOTION: To adjourn

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Griffith Moved, Oemig Second)

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, June 7, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang
Executive Assistant