



**COMMISSION ON AGING
Advocacy Committee
March 6, 2023**

Advocacy Committee members convened virtually on Monday, March 6, 2023.

Members Present:

Commissioner John Griffith
Commissioner Elliott Moeser, Chair
Commissioner Cindy Van Vreede
T.R. Edwards
Sharon Jackson
Sopheya Farrell
Harold Oemig
Paul Pedersen

Staff Present:

Michelle Allison
Mary Proctor Brown
Daniel Idzikowski
Clare O'Brien
Paris Ortrialla
Kayla Steinke

Members Excused:

Commissioner Ron Byington
Supervisor Sequanna Taylor
Bill Meunier, co-chair
Michael Glabere
Trina Koch
Gary Mikolajczyk
Maureen Fitzgerald

Attendees from the Public

Audrey Carrigan, Vital Voices
Maureen Conrad
Brennan O'Connell, ADRC Board
Interpreter-Tanya
Katrina Mosely
Cathy Wood, Serving Older Adults

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Advocacy Committee has a quorum. Chair Elliot Moeser called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Daniel Idzikowski, Director of DHHS Aging Unit took a roll call.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF the February 6, 2023 meeting minutes

The minutes were not available for approval and this item is laid over to next month.

III. Update on Action Items

a. **Advocacy & Policy Manager position:** Last week Wednesday the posting closed and the candidates who applied are being screened by HR. Director Idzikowski will have a candidate list to review for scheduling interviews which will take place in the next 2 weeks. Chair Moeser will serve on the panel for those interviews.

b. **CoA Public Policy Priorities:** Moeser skipped this topic.

c. **Proposed Wisconsin Constitutional Amendments:** There are 2 proposed amendments to the Wisconsin Constitution that will appear on the April 4th Spring election ballot and one advisory referendum. The proposed amendments relate to setting of conditions for bail. The advisory referendum that asks about the Wisconsin work requirements for individuals who receive public benefits. An attachment is included that explains each of these Ballot initiatives.

d. **State Budget & Surplus Funding Proposals:** The Governor introduced his Executive state budget. Idzikowski included an analysis of provisions that would affect the Aging community provided by the Wisconsin Aging Action Network. The budget will be forwarded to the joint Committee on Finance and the chairs of the Joint Finance Committee will probably not accept the Governor's proposed budget but will use the current base budget as a starting point for the next biennial state budget. Idzikowski is waiting to draft a letter to legislators regarding the request to use the portion of the funding for older adults or until after the budget was introduced.

MOTION: That the Commission on Aging send a letter asking the state legislature to use a portion of the surplus budget funding to support older adults.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Moeser moved, Jackson seconds).

e. **Parks and Recreation Access for older adults:** Director Idzikowski, had a brief contact with Parks Department about this issue in conjunction with our Senior Centers Committee. There was no concrete action in that regard.

f. **Medicare & Social Security Proposals:** Unfortunately Representative Moore's Social Security Enhancement and Protection Act of 2023 did not get any co-sponsors and it does not look like it is moving. Senator Bernie Sanders, along with about 8 other senators, and a group of Democratic Representatives reintroduced the Social Security Expansion Act, which if passed will expand Social Security benefits by \$2,400 a year and fully fund the Social Security Trust Fund for the next 75 years. The Fund is currently solvent until 2030, at which in time there would have to be some reduction in benefits to make future payouts.

g. **WAAN Structure & Support:** The Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging is a voting member in the Wisconsin Aging Action Network (WAAN) the statewide coalition service provider within the Older Americans Act aging network. Other voting groups include the Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors, the Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers, the Wisconsin Association of Benefits Specialists, and a new group the Wisconsin Association of Senior Advocates. A committee has been meeting to consider whether to expand voting membership in WAAN or to change the nature of its structure to a more direct membership organization. The committee's recommendation was not to fundamentally change the structure, nor to make it an open membership type organization with dues, but

to keep the structure basically as it is and add a couple additional statewide organizations, including the Wisconsin Association of public health agencies and, the Wisconsin association of Veteran's Services Officers. There's also a question about raising dues, because to carry out not only the public policy advocacy, but the actual lobbying that occurs, WAAN must use non-federal and state dollars.

h. Privatization of Family Care (Long Term Care): The privatization of Family Care seems to continue to move forward. This is the acquisition by Molina healthcare and Humana health care of 2 of the 4 remaining Managed Care Organizations. My Choice Family Care which serves Milwaukee County is the largest MCO that would be acquired. There was an article in a health business magazine in which the Director of Humana said this is a done deal, and they're acquiring these kinds of entities all over the country. They see that focusing more on the public business and less in the private Health market as the way to grow their business and to make sure that they replace the membership in their in their Medicaid plans that will be lost when the pandemic officially ends.

IV. Legislative & Policy Updates:

Federal Aging Policy: Idzikowski stated there will be a policy briefing on the 118th Congress in relation to aging issues by NCOA later this month, as well as the Policy Briefing by USAging in April.

Senator Baldwin indicated that today is the deadline for submitting applications for federal earmark funding. Congress brought back the Federal earmark last year Milwaukee County will be submitting a project or 2 for that purpose.

State Legislative Issues: A few items that have already been introduced to legislation at the state level. Most of these have to do with voting rights issues that we have taken positions on in the past.

We will develop testimony for Commission on Aging to present at the Joint Finance Committee hearings on the Budget. WAAN has identified four budget priorities to advance with legislators in state budget meetings: ADRC expansion & rebalancing, home delivered meal programs, support for specialized transportation for older adults, and caregiver support funding. Milwaukee County also had a priority to expand funding for our Adult Protective Services program. Discussion ensued on the need to ensure that Medicaid expansion in Wisconsin was among the items advanced by the Commission on Aging.

MOTION: To support the expansion of Medicaid to residents of Wisconsin at or below 135% of the federal poverty level under the Affordable Care Act and to contact the Governor and the Legislature in support of this issue.

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

Milwaukee County Legislative Issues: The County budget cycle begins again in 2024 and our Department of Health and Human Services Budget Director Matt Fortman will be presenting at the full Commission on Aging on that process.

MOTION: Send a message to the County Board Members asking for a 10% increase in County Levy funding for aging services in Milwaukee County.

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

- V. **Ageism in Policy Advocacy:** Commissioner Elliot Moeser spoke on the topic of Ageism at the last meeting in February with concerns of what appears to be an ever-increasing public discussion that display prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age. That is a definition of ageism. Commissioner Moeser asked this item to be placed on the agenda because he is seeing a pattern of ageism happening in the State of Wisconsin and throughout the nation. This is stereotyping people based on their age instead of judging people on their competency, their skills, their knowledge. Commissioner Moeser would like Director Idzikowski to assist with drafting a letter from himself and Chair Wilberg on this topic by March 24, 2023.

MOTION: To request the Governor to launch a campaign against ageism.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Commissioner Moeser moved, Sharon Jackson, second)

- VI. **Commission on Aging Policymakers Gathering & WAAN Aging Advocacy Day:** The gathering is set for May 24th at 4:00pm at Washington Park Senior Center. Director Idzikowski suggests that we ask the legislators which time is best for them for this gathering – morning or afternoon.

- VII. **Membership Recruitment:** Mr. Edwards is the newest & most recent member added to the Advocacy Committee.

- VIII. **Announcements & Advocacy Opportunities:** (Inform.)

- a. *WI Spring Election-Tuesday, April 4th*
- b. [How Wisconsin Elections Work 2023](#) March 6, 2023-5 p.m.
- c. *2023 US Aging Policy Briefing: 4/25/2023 Washington, D.C.*
- d. *Briefing by the National Council on Aging (March 15, 2023 12:00)*

- IX. **ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m. (Edwards/Sharon)

Respectfully Submitted,
Ortrialla Paris