



ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 5, 2025

The Milwaukee County Aging Advocacy Committee convened in person at Kelly Senior Center on Friday, September 5, 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
Sopheya Farrell
Paulette Maclin
Gary Mikolajczyk
Harold Oemig
Tom Suchecki
Commissioner Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.

Members Excused

Kimberly King
Trina Koch
William Meunier
Kathy Scott

Milwaukee County Staff

Jill Knight, *DHHS*
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*
Matt Fortman, *DHHS*
Emily Petersen, *DHHS*
Deidra Williams, *DHHS*

Attendees from the Public

Joseph Crivello, *TMS ICA*
Johanna Jimenez, *CDA*
Joe Leibham/Foley
Steph Zito, *ASL Interpreter*
Jill Kenahan-Krey, *ASL Interpreter*
Rene Smith
Brook Stanley

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Brian Peters called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. The AAA Advocacy and Policy Manager, Emily Petersen conducted the roll call. A quorum was present.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JUNE 6, 2025, AND AUGUST 1, 2025, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve June 6, 2025, and August 1, 2025, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes.

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

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

Chair Peters highlighted several upcoming events:

- A. Milwaukee County AARP Age-Friendly Communities Survey:** Chair Peters encouraged committee members to take part in the Milwaukee County American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Age-Friendly Communities survey. This survey has been shared several times and included in the meeting packet. If you haven't signed up yet, please take a moment to do so.
- B. Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus Listening Sessions:** Emily Petersen, the AAA Advocacy and Policy Manager, informed the committee that individuals interested in participating in the Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus Listening Sessions must register by accessing her Advocacy Alerts e-newsletter. She sent the newsletter to members last Friday, which included the registration links. This information was not available when the support staff compiled the packets. The Listening Session is scheduled for October 2, 2025, in Milwaukee, with the specific location yet to be determined. Senator Dora Drake currently serves as the chair. The Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus aims to develop a policy agenda that enhances the economic power and independence of Black Wisconsin residents.

IV. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES

A. Federal Aging Policy

I. Federal Budget and Issues

- a. 2026 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (Action Item):** Ms. Petersen discussed the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule and emphasized the importance of commenting on the inclusion of services offered by the AAA. She noted that this year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is considering incorporating AAA programs as part of the reimbursement services under Medicare, which makes it crucial for the Advocacy Committee to submit its comments this year.

The Advocacy Committee approved a motion to write a letter to Dr. Oz, the Director of Medicare Services, explaining how AAA services, Title IIIB services, and caregiver support services contribute to promoting healthy living activities for older adults and their caregivers. These services help reduce the burden on the healthcare system as they are evidence-based and support wellness programs.

MOTION: Submit a comment on the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule explaining how Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) services contribute to health promotion and evidence-based wellness programs.

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

b. Older Americans Act Title V, Senior Community Service Employment Program (Discussion/Action):

The committee discussed the sudden discontinuation of funding for the Senior Community Service Employment Program, which connects older adults with local job opportunities and provides essential training to help increase their income and financial stability.

The Department of Labor recently halted funding, affecting approximately 1,200 to 1,300 older adults in Wisconsin. Although the president's budget proposed cuts for 2026, the Senate committee has suggested restoring the funding.

Ms. Petersen included an article that highlighted how funding losses led to job placements failing. In response, the Advocacy Committee decided to send a letter to Congressional representatives to advocate for the program's continued funding.

MOTION: To send a letter to federal congressional representatives advocating for the continuation of funding for the Senior Community Service Employment Program

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

c. Department of Labor Rule Change for Paid Caregivers

(Discussion/Action Item): Ms. Petersen explained the issue and the process related to this action item. A few years ago, the Department of Labor included home health workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), allowing them to receive overtime pay and minimum wage. Previously, these workers were not covered by these regulations. Currently, the Department of Labor is considering removing home health workers from FLSA coverage again. The deadline for sending a letter regarding this matter is September 5, 2025. Ms. Petersen noted that, due to this deadline, the Advocacy Committee needed to seek permission from the Executive Committee, which agreed to have a letter sent on their behalf. The committee has since retroactively approved a letter addressing the Department of Labor's proposed rule change that would impact on the eligibility of home health workers for overtime and minimum wage protections.

MOTION: To retroactively approve the letter that was sent commenting on the Department of Labor's proposed rule change affecting home health workers' eligibility for overtime and minimum wage protections

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

II. Federal Regulations and Executive Orders

- a. Executive Order (August 7, 2025) Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking (Informational Item):** Ms. Petersen explained that on August 7, 2025, the President issued a new executive order concerning discretionary grants. This order outlines the grant-making process and specifies the types of grant applications that will be considered for funding. Notably, it excludes formula grant, block grants and those under the Older Americans Act, which are not classified as discretionary grants. She emphasized that formula grants, such as those provided under the Older Americans Act, will remain unaffected. The committee then discussed the potential implications of this order for advocacy efforts and future grant applications.

B. State Legislative Issues

I. State Budget & Legislation

- a. Review State Legislation Tracker:** Emily provided updates on state legislative issues, highlighting the Governor's recent signing of the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program bill. She also mentioned the introduction of a bill to fund evidence-based wellness programs at the state level. Previously, the Joint Finance Committee removed the funding for these wellness programs early in the process.

This bipartisan bill has support in both the Assembly and Senate, which increases its chances of reaching the signature stage. If approved, it would allocate \$900,000 to the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging to fund grants for all Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) focused on fall prevention programs.

II. Administrative Rules & Governor's Taskforces

No Report

C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues

I. Milwaukee County Budget and Legislation

- a. Milwaukee County 2026 Budget Update Matt Fortman, DHHS Chief Financial Officer (Discussion Item):** Matt Fortman presented an overview of the 2026 county budget through a PowerPoint presentation. He explained the ongoing budget process, which involves the County Executive and the County Board. Ms. Petersen provided essential dates related to the budget process and will share this information with the Advocacy Committee.

In his presentation, Mr. Fortman highlighted significant changes in next year's budget, including cuts to behavioral health services and the elimination of the senior chore program. He also discussed how juvenile corrections rates will impact the budget and outlined potential challenges in 2027.

- b. Milwaukee Market Match (Discussion/Action Item):** The Advocacy Committee reviewed a request to support the Milwaukee Market Match program, previously funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The Advocacy Committee raised concerns regarding the availability of funding and its potential impact on other aging programs. As a result, the committee decided not to support the extension of this program.

II. Aging Items of Interest

Uber and Lyft: Advocacy Committee member Mikolajczyk asked about the use Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), like Uber and Lyft, for the provision of aging transportation services. Milwaukee County has considered using Uber and Lyft as alternative transportation options for seniors. Currently, no agreements have been made with these companies since they do not provide accessible vehicles for individuals with physical disabilities. However, some Medicare Advantage plans provide flex benefits that can be used on transportation.

V. REVIEW 2025 COMMISSION ON AGING AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE POLICY PRIORITIES

Chair Peters informed the Advocacy Committee that two or three new priorities have been added since the creation of the original priority list. Ms. Petersen distributed a new list in the meeting packets and explained that the new items are listed at the end of the original policy priorities.

VI. 2025-2027 AGING AREA AGENCY PLAN ADVOCACY GOALS REVIEW

In the second quarter there were no changes. The Advocacy Committee assessed its advocacy goals and progress, highlighting significant achievements in the second quarter, including the recruitment of new members and successful advocacy efforts during Aging Advocacy Day.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:19 a.m.. The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, October 3, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang
Executive Assistant

DRAFT