



February 22, 2022

Hon. Recipient  
United States  
Street Address  
Washington, D.C. ZIP

Dear Senator/Representative ,

On behalf of the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging and the 184,000 older adults residing in Milwaukee County, we urge your support to increase appropriations for Older Americans Act (OAA) and related aging programs within the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services in Federal Fiscal Year 2023. While older Americans (including more than 1000 residents of Milwaukee County) suffered the brunt of COVID-19 death, isolation, and economic deprivation, during the last two federal fiscal years Congress actually underfunded the very programs it designed to keep them safe, engaged and supported in their communities. We beg you to recognize the urgency of providing long term help to older adults in FFY 2023 and to double funding under the Older Americans Act.

OAA programs and services funded through the U.S. Administration on Aging are delivered locally by the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging and our network of community providers, including:

- Older Adult Transportation Services
- Meals on Wheels, Nutrition Education, and 24 Dining Sites
- Free Legal Services, including eviction defense and elder benefit protection
- Late Life Counseling and Wellness Checks
- Caregiver Support, Respite Services, and Dementia Care Specialists
- Recreation and Wellness Programs
- Home and Community Based Long Term Care and Supports

In Milwaukee County the number of older adults we serve is growing faster than at any other point in history. During the pandemic, we undertook extraordinary measures to ensure that our residents would continue to have access to nutritious meals, healthcare, and wellness checks. In planning for our 2022-24 Milwaukee County Area Aging Plan, we surveyed 7500 older adults and developed 50 new goals in response to better serve our residents and ensure older adults can live healthy, independent, and engaged lives in their neighborhoods.

These goals will require a sustained effort and additional funding. New initiatives include the ability to provide better support for family caregivers, options for in-home care services, broadband access and technical support, and financial management services, particularly for widows and widowers. We desperately need increased resources to develop, train, and retain a high quality, caring long-term care workforce to deliver on our promise of supporting our residents to age in place in their communities and funding for our Aging and Disability Resource Centers to connect older adults with the services and supports they need.

We encourage you to support increases to every part of the OAA, starting with OAA Title III B Supportive Services, our most flexible source of OAA funding and a backbone set of services that proved invaluable throughout the pandemic.

Nearly three quarters of those who died in Wisconsin from COVID-19 were age 70 or older. Many of them died isolated and alone. Falls among older adults have skyrocketed. Routine healthcare was delayed or abandoned. Mental illness, suicide, depression, and opioid addiction all soared. Financial and Medicare scams took advantage of more isolated older adults. Older adults were affected negatively in almost every aspect of life.

We call upon you, as our federal representatives to make wise federal investments in programs that help older adults age well in their homes and communities and that support caregivers. In the interest of the older adults that we serve and that you represent in



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Milwaukee County, we implore you and your colleagues to support a long-term FFY 2023 funding bill that doubles funding from FFY 2022 for critical OAA and ancillary aging programs, as well as Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Medicaid Waiver Home and Community Based Services.

Please feel free to reach out anytime on these or any aging issues of importance to you and your constituents.

Sincerely,



John Griffith, Chair  
Commission on Aging



Elliot Moeser, Chair  
Aging Advocacy Committee

cc: Shakita LaGrant, Milwaukee County DHHS Director