

Dear Republican/Democratic Party Chair:

The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging represents the more than 172,000 older adults in Milwaukee County. Voters who are aged 60+ turn out to vote at the highest rate of any demographic in the United States. Older voters care deeply about the public good and represent a broad spectrum of policy interests and political affiliation. As the general election nears, we advise that the [Democratic/Republican] party adopt the following policy principles into your party platform:

The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging supports policies that ensure older adults can live safe, healthy, and engaged lives in the community with financial and housing security and caregiver supports.

Social Security

Background: Social Security is a federal program providing economic security after retirement or disability to an individual earner and their spouse. Social Security and Disability Insurance benefits are based upon an individual's lifetime earnings. Most workers pay a percentage of their wages into this fund. Supplemental Security Income pays a base amount to elder adults in poverty and persons with disabilities out of general revenue. Forty percent of Wisconsin's seniors would live below the poverty line without Social Security.

Position: Protect and strengthen the current structure of Social Security. Oppose all efforts that would decrease Social Security, SSDI, or SSI benefits or privatize fund investment. Support an increase in the payroll tax cap and make the CPI-E the applicable Index for computing OASDI benefits. Oppose any suspension of the payroll tax.

Medicare

Background: Medicare is the primary health care insurance option for persons 65 and older. Many benefits were added through the Affordable Care Act, including closing the Medicare Part D donut hole. Medicare does not cover long term care, dental, vision, or hearing. Medicare is more cost-effective than any private insurance. There are more than 155,000 Milwaukee County residents receiving Medicare.

Positions: Oppose any effort to cut program benefits, change the program to a voucher-style program, or to phase out the program for older adults or persons 65 or older.

- Allow the federal government to negotiate the price of prescription drugs approved in the Medicare formulary with pharmaceutical companies;
- Add a Catastrophic Out-of-Pocket Limit for traditional Medicare.
- Require payment parity between traditional Medicare and the Medicare Advantage program, with savings in MA plans reinvested into the Medicare program to the benefit of all enrollees.
- Add comprehensive vision, hearing, and dental benefits to Medicare.

- Increase long term care coverage through Medicare.
- Simplify Medicare Part B enrollment and add Medigap enrollment protections.
- Expand coverage of telehealth and new flexibilities afforded during the COVID-19 PHE.

Older Americans Act (OAA)

Background: The Older Americans Act (OAA) has advanced the health, wellness, and community engagement of our growing older adult population. Through the Milwaukee County Department on Aging is able to provide high quality services in the areas of special concern to older adults: nutrition, transportation, caregiver support, social services, employment, and advocacy. OAA programs leverage state, local, and private dollars and volunteers to help seniors age in place and avoid unnecessary residential treatment. Funding for the OAA has not kept pace with inflation or population growth.

Position: Support the Older Americans Act, local flexibility and increase funding under each of its titles. Support mandatory funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers.

Caregiving

Background: As our population aging, stress has been placed on both formal and informal caregivers, who are either unpaid, or underpaid without access to employment benefits. A national crisis has arisen around the availability of caregivers and the quality of caregiving for older adults and people with disabilities. The RAISE Family Caregivers Act requires the Administration for Community Living to develop, maintain and update an integrated national strategy to recognize and support family caregivers. The bill brings together stakeholders to recommend a national caregiving support strategy.

Position: Support an extension of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act and the National Family Caregiving Advisory Council and provide funding to implement its recommendations. Raise the Medicaid reimbursement rates for CNAs, PCAs, and other front line care-workers.