

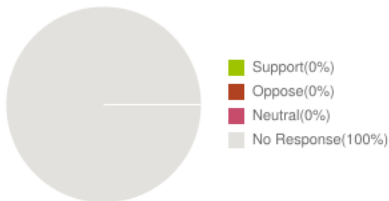
Finance Committee-Budget on 2020-10-15 9:30 AM - VIRTUAL BUDGET MEETING
This meeting will be live-streamed on the County Legislative Information Center:
<https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>
 10-15-20 09:30

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
3 20-733A From the County Executive, submitting the 2021 Recommended Budget.	4	0	0	0
5 20-733A From the County Executive, submitting the 2021 Recommended Budget.	1	0	0	0

Sentiments for All Agenda Items

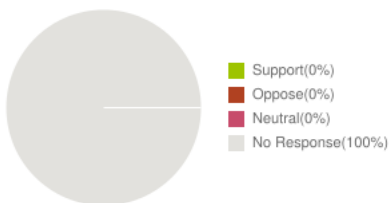
The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



Agenda Item: eComments for 3 20-733A From the County Executive, submitting the 2021 Recommended Budget.

Overall Sentiment



Richmond Izard

Location:

Submitted At: 11:54pm 10-14-20

8000 DHHS; merger opposed.

THE AGING DIFFERENCE

Honorable Supervisors,

Whereas administration neglected to 1) consult governing bodies about a department merger, 2) seek public input and 3) provide data to justify proposed changes, the Finance Committee should amend the 2021 budget to

keep MCDA separate from DHHS, as was resolved unanimously in 2016 under file #16-67.

I appeal to you as Chair of the Commission on Aging and voice of 170,000 residents age 60+. Seniors comprise 20% of the population, the fastest growing (Census Bureau 2020) and single most consistent demographic to vote (Crowley, 2020). Research also establishes older adults as being the most prayerful (Pew Research Center, 2020). We implore you to hear our prayer.

The commission adopted and published Milwaukee County Commission on Aging 2020 Public Policy Priorities on January 24, 2020, memorializing the citizen Advocacy Committee's desire to maintain a separate department. Hence, an attempt to divest or merge MCDA at this time is a bad idea, especially with seniors being most at-risk in the pandemic and having had no input into a DHHS/Aging integration plan.

While County Exec Crowley recommends the Aging budget and merger with good intentions, he errs in two critical ways protected by law. First, he overlooks the spirit and plain language of the Older Americans Act (OAA), which requires older adults to be active in all planning and oversight of programs funded by federal and state OAA dollars. Second, administration has subverted the authority of governing bodies to oversee aging business. Furthermore, administration offers no empirical data to support claims that a merger will increase efficiencies and better serve older adults.

Administration fails to identify any inefficiencies or present information common to a basic project charter. An implementation plan should identify objectives, risk mitigation, stakeholders, current and desired state process maps, root cause analysis, and definitions of success. But most profoundly, administration has not sought and included the voice of seniors.

So, why is Aging different?

Mandated senior participation and self-determination marks the aging difference. "The aging difference" is so significant to program development and delivery that "A Manual of Policies, Procedures, & Technical Assistance for the Wisconsin Aging Network" cites the phrase 41 times (DHS, 2011). The manual also expressly addresses issues before us today:

"Considerations about where aging units fit in local government occasionally focus on imagined efficiencies... However, the major point to consider is the effectiveness of the aging unit at representing older people in their government. When counties...are considering altering the place of the aging unit in local government, they are strongly advised to conduct the deliberations in a very public fashion, and must involve older people and their organizations at every level" (DHS, 2011, p. 3-12)

Izard, COA Chair

Cathy Wood

Location:

Submitted At: 9:29pm 10-14-20

Org Unit 8000 SPA 9 Support

The County senior centers serve over 5,000 seniors each year and I am asking for the Supervisors support in maintaining funding for the important services the centers provide. There is a common misperception that if the centers are closed Jan-Mar 2021, less funding will be needed to continue services. This is not a true statement. When the centers are open, classes are taught by volunteers, not paid employees, so eliminating in-person programming does not result in salary savings. The centers are staffed very leanly, and the staff have been busy since the centers closed in March. Staff distribute daily meals to over 420 people, they make wellness check calls to all registered participants, they answer incoming calls, they create engaging, interactive virtual programming, they design and produce a monthly magazine, a bimonthly newsletter, ongoing informational flyers, and cheery greeting cards. The staff are partnering with a school to create fun, intergenerational virtual programming and they are developing a program to increase seniors' access to technology. The Department on Aging has suggested that the current center staff can be replaced with County staff. This does not make sense from either a financial or program quality point of view. Not only are County employees more highly compensated than the center staff, but they also lack the experience and personal connection with center participants. Seniors have been impacted the hardest by this pandemic and to reduce funding for programming that continues to connect

and engage them would cause increased loneliness and isolation. Research shows that increased isolation and loneliness leads to a rise in physical and mental health challenges. Now, more than ever, the County needs to prioritize services for those who have given to their communities their entire lives. Now is not the time to abandon our seniors. Thank you. Submitted by: Cathy Wood, President/CEO of Serving Older Adults.

Patricia Bruce

Location:

Submitted At: 6:22pm 10-14-20

I am commenting on the Health & Human Services Budget for the Department on Aging which includes the proposal to remove "Department" status for Aging thus demoting and creating a Division of Aging. As a social worker hired by neighborhood congregations to provide volunteer services to older adults in their community I worked on Milwaukee's near north side for 16 years before the creation of a Department of Aging in 1991. Our elders felt that they had no voice, no pride, no hope that "the system was working for them". Society afforded them little dignity and the county service system was a "swamp" they could not maneuver. They were often the object of age bias by programs and workers that were not skilled at understanding or working with older adults or their families. Those working with the elderly at the grass roots helped bring their voices to their County Supervisors and everyone together listened. Together the Department on Aging was formed. It became the backbone of aging services, fostered pride, showed hope and grew as a real voice with and for older adults in Milwaukee County. Now it is 2020, I cannot believe how "age equity" has melted away because of poor, woefully inadequate leadership in the past few years. I cannot believe that all of this can be taken away in just one COVID laced budget cycle. No voices of older adults have collectively gathered or have been heard by County Supervisors or even the Department that is supposed to serve us, represent us. It seems as if DHHS, The Department of Aging and the County Executive are taking advantage of the pandemic. Seniors have no place to meet and a vast many do not have the technology to communicate among each other or with you. Most could never find their way into this e-comment tool. The county has not defined for us what was broken within the Department that is now going to be fixed by becoming a Division. None of this was presented by staff in time for study and informed review to the one voice we have, The Commission on Aging (COA). I implore you; postpone this seemingly underhanded operational move until you can communicate with the COA, the variety of elders in Milwaukee County and together, once again identify and build strong leadership with and for thousands of elders. Milwaukee County is trying to become one of the healthiest counties in the state. Is this really the way to do it? Patricia Bruce MTS, CSW, 2621 N 81 St., Wauwatosa and Member of the Aging and Disabilities Resource Center Governing Board

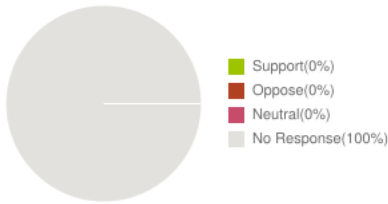
Janice Wilberg

Location:

Submitted At: 12:25pm 10-14-20

Dear Chairman Haas and members of the Finance Committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed 2021 DHHS budget. I want to specifically address the merger of the Department on Aging into DHHS. My belief is that this action will significantly improve services for older adults. I am glad to see the addition of three direct service positions made possible by reducing management duplication. I would really rather have more staff who can directly help seniors and if merging is a way to trim expensive management costs, I'm all for it. I also support the 'no wrong door' approach. Older adults aren't just old. That's not their only situation. They very often have other pressing issues - like homelessness, disability, mental health needs. We (older adults) should not have to go out one door and go knock on another to get the help we need. So, I really support sensible streamlining of services. That said, the Department on Aging has planning and advocacy responsibilities, including support for a strong Commission on Aging, that shouldn't be lost in this move. These are functions that are part of the Department on Aging's designation as an Area Agency on Aging and they should be protected and strengthened going forward. Old adults have a tremendous stake in Milwaukee County and important talents and gifts to share. We need the leadership of older adults to have a great community. So please maintain these opportunities going forward. I offer my opinion as a 72-year old resident of Milwaukee County, homeowner, taxpayer, and strong supporter of county government for many decades. Sincerely, Janice Wilberg, Ph.D., 3269 N. Summit Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53211

Overall Sentiment



stephanie stein

Location:

Submitted At: 10:44am 10-14-20

Chairman Haas and Members of the Committee: I am writing in opposition to the proposed merger of the Department

on Aging with the Department of Health and Human Services,

This budget action was taken without the Consultation or advice of the Commission on Aging or any older people. This stands in direct opposition to the laws governing Aging units. The Older American's Act, Wisconsin Statute and County Ordinance are all clear about the role of older people in decisions which will affect their lives.

Milwaukee County agreed decades ago to accept the federal designation as an Area Agency on Aging. As such all functions performed by the Department on Aging are those of an Area Agency. The budget narrative talks about enhanced services for older people. It is clear that those services are now and can be delivered without the merger.

What is not clear is that those crafting this budget are aware of the other equally important functions of the Department.

Those functions are Advocacy on behalf of the more than 170,000 persons over 60 in Milwaukee County, Leadership on marshalling all community assets to address pressing issues such as social isolation in the midst of a pandemic and planning for the future needs of older adults with them not for them.

It is problematic that this merger was not suggested to the County Executive in either the Aging or the Health and Human Services Departments requested budgets. Thus Commissioners, Advocates and the public could not react before the County Executive made a decision. Rather what was proposed in the requested Department on Aging budget was the unfunded and thus remaining vacant position of Director. That did raise dissent and was blatantly illegal and not allowed under state statute. How is it possible that no one in either Aging nor DHHS knew about state law? It is possible because Aging has lacked a Director for some time who has experience in the field, knowledge of regulations or passion for Older Adults and their many and varied contributions to this community.

In this budget positions are eliminated which are essential in advancing community collaboration and planning, The Assistant Director and a Program coordinator. The budget claims this is necessary to create front line positions- even though those positions are income generating and paid for by increased state and federal allocations. This is not an even or legitimate trade.

I would recommend that you reject this merger, reject the abolishment of these positions, and ask the County Executive and the Departments to return to this question outside of the Budget cycle and after consultation and collaboration with the Commission on Aging and the interested public return to you with a proposal which is arrived at taking into account the needs and contributions of almost one fifth of Milwaukee County's population, her senior citizens. Thank You Stephanie Sue Stein