ADVOCACY UPDATE – Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging

Dear colleagues, advocates, and partners, Happy Spring! Please find the latest edition of our Advocacy Update below.

TUESDAY! is the 2021 Spring Election!

<u>Tell Congress Thank You for Supporting Older Americans through the American</u> <u>Recovery Plan Act</u>

Information on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Joint Finance Committee Budget Hearings: In-Person and Virtual

<u>2022-23 Wisconsin State Budget – Aging Advocacy Presentations</u>

Aging Advocacy Day of Action!

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TUESDAY is the 2021 Spring Election!

Tuesday, April 5th, 2021, is the Spring Election!

Polls are open from 7am-8pm. Check out <u>My Vote Wisconsin</u> for polling locations and times.

For more information about elections and voting contact these resources:

 Milwaukee County Election Commission: <u>https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/County-Clerk/Election-Commission</u>. To get text alerts about elections, text "MKE VOTE" to 468311.

- Wisconsin Elections Commission: 1-866-VOTE-WIS <u>elections@wi.gov</u> <u>elections.wi.gov/</u>.
- Disability Rights Wisconsin Voter Hotline: 1-844-347-8683 / 1-844-DIS-VOTE; Email us at info@disabilityvote.org; disabilityvote.org/.
- <u>Vote411.org</u>: nonpartisan information about the candidates.

The Milwaukee County Division on Aging and Transit Plus are again providing FREE rides to the polls – schedule a ride today with your provider!

Tell Congress THANK YOU for Supporting Older Americans in American Rescue

Plan Act.

Contact your federal Senators and Representatives to <u>thank them</u> for including significant funding for Older Americans Act programs, local and state government revenue support, and transit operations in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (<u>H.R.</u> 1319). The \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package includes a historic \$1.434 billion in emergency funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) programs. The ARPA funding will help support critical OAA services and provide resources to support the aging network's work to assist with vaccination efforts, food distribution, and provide social connections for isolated older adults.

Milwaukee County's U.S. Representatives:

1st <u>Steil, Bryan</u> - (202) 225-3031 4th <u>Moore, Gwen</u> - (202) 225-4572 5th <u>Scott Fitzgerald</u> - (202) 225-5101 Go <u>here</u> to find out who your U.S. Representative is.

Wisconsin's U.S. Senators

Baldwin, Tammy - (D - WI) 709 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510 (202) 224-5653 Contact: <u>www.baldwin.senate.gov/feedback</u>

<u>Johnson, Ron </u>- (R - WI)

328 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

(202) 224-5323

Contact: <u>www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-the-sena...</u>

Information on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

U.S. Representative Gwen Moore held a town hall explaining the provisions of ARPA, you can watch it <u>here</u>. You will find the slides presented during the town hall <u>here</u>. If you would like to learn more about the American Rescue Plan, visit

her webpage <u>here</u>.

Joint Finance Committee Budget Hearings: In-Person and Virtual

- The Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Finance Committee will be holding in-person public hearings on the 2021-23 state budget as well as one virtual hearing. The hearing schedule includes:
- Friday, April 9, 2021 UW-Whitewater, Whitewater, WI
- Wednesday, April 21, 2021 The Hodag Dome, Rhinelander, WI
- Thursday, April 22, 2021 UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI
- Wednesday, April 28, 2021 Virtual

The public hearings will begin at 10 am and conclude at 5 pm. The format will be similar to past hearings. Management at each of the venues will monitor capacity. Those wishing to testify at the virtual hearing will be required to register in advance, details to come on the registration process. A portal is available for individuals to provide input: www.legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments as well as an email address: budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov.

2022-23 Wisconsin State Budget – Aging Advocacy Presentations

The Milwaukee County Division on Aging, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network, will host virtual sessions in April to explain the state budget process and items of interest to older adults.

- Monday, April 12th at 1:30 p.m.: <u>Join with Google Meets</u> or Call 1-617-675-4444 PIN: 397 031 008 3642#
- Friday, April 16th at 8:30 a.m.: <u>Join with Google Meets</u> or Call 1-617-675-4444 PIN: 445 271 677 8428#
- Tuesday, April 20th at 5:30 p.m.: <u>Join with Google Meets</u> or Call 1-617-675-4444 PIN: 874 756 114 9081#

Register NOW for Aging Advocacy Days of Action!

- Monday, May 10th, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Advocate Training
- Wednesday, May 12th, 1:00-2:00 p.m. Small group legislative visits

Join us online to advocate for older adults! Join advocates from around the state to help educate state legislators about issues affecting older adults and caregivers in Wisconsin! No experience necessary; online training is provided prior to your small group virtual legislative meetings with state lawmakers or staff. Links for your meetings will be sent prior to each day'sevent.* For more go to: <u>Aging Advocacy Day 2021</u>. Register at: <u>https://gwaar.wufoo.com/forms/z1xa9cf904ub7by/</u>.

Share your Wisconsin State Budget Priorities with Your State Legislators: To get contact information for your state Senator and Representative:

- "Who Are My Legislators?" on Wisconsin State Legislature Home Page
- Call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-362-9472

To contact members of the state budget committee, find their information on <u>the Joint</u> <u>Committee on Finance website here</u>. Four members represent Milwaukee County!

Disability Rights and Voting: A Virtual Briefing

• Monday, April 12th (An Explanation of Election Law and Proposed Changes)

• Tuesday, April 13th (Advocacy Guide to Election Law and Proposed Changes) See the Disability Vote Coalition for more information: <u>Wisconsin Disability Vote</u> <u>Coalition</u>

Medicare 101 Training Sponsored by the Milwaukee County Department on Aging

Our <u>virtual webinar</u> on the <u>basics of Medicare is available on our website</u>. The session includes an objective overview of Medicare plan types.

- Understand the A,B,C and D of Medicare
- How to enroll and free enrollment assistance
- Help with Medicare costs
- Free Medicare counseling and legal assistance

In addition, the MKE SHIP Collaborative will be hosting a monthly Medicare-in-5 minutes or less video series on a range of topics. <u>March's video focused on Medicare Savings</u> <u>Plans</u>.

MCTS NEXT Previews System Enhancements

Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) is hosting virtual public meetings to give an overview of what to expect for MCTS NEXT, the system redesign project bringing faster service, more connections and easier-to-understand routing. MCTS hosted four virtual public meetings in February and March 2021 to give an overview of what to expect for Phase One of MCTS NEXT, which takes effect on March 7, 2021. Did you miss the events? No problem. You can click the links below to watch archived video:

English Version

Spanish Version (En Español)

We will also be hosting virtual public meetings ahead of MCTS NEXT's Phase Two (June 6, 2021) and Phase Three (August 29, 2021). Please click the buttons below to register for

our available meetings.

Wednesday, May 26 Wednesday, June 2

Wisconsin Legislation followed by the Wisconsin Aging Action Network:

- <u>AB201</u> absentee ballot applications, unsolicited mailing or transmission of absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots, canvassing absentee ballots, electronic voter registration, and providing a penalty.
- SB 203 / AB 192 (LRB 1537) The secure delivery of absentee ballots and providing a penalty: Would limit options to obtain and return absentee ballots. This bill would limit who can return the voter's absentee ballot to the voter's immediate family or legal guardian, with some very limited exceptions.
- <u>SB 204</u> (LRB 2032) Absentee ballot applications, unsolicited mailing or transmission of absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots, canvassing absentee ballots, electronic voter registration, and providing a penalty: This bill requires indefinitely confined voters to provide a photo ID with their absentee ballot request. The bill eliminates the option for indefinitely confined voters to receive an absentee ballot automatically for any election. Clerks, the Election Commission, and other groups would no longer be allowed to mail absentee ballot applications to all eligible voters; this bill makes it a felony to mail absentee ballot applications to anyone who has not requested one.
- <u>SB 205</u> / AB 179 (LRB 1935) Absentee voting in certain residential care facilities and retirement homes and providing a penalty: Would limit voting rights of nursing home and group home residents. If staff offered to provide a resident with assistance, this would be a felony. This bill would require the administrator of the facility to notify relatives of the residents as to when the special voting deputies will be coming to the facility to assist in the casting of absentee ballots.
- <u>SB 206</u> / AB 180 (LRB 0428) Status as an indefinitely confined voter for purposes of receiving absentee ballots automatically and providing a penalty: Would limit voting rights of voters who certify as "indefinitely confined". These voters would be required to provide statements under oath. Voters under 65 would need to have their statements signed by their doctors. A false statement would be a felony. Voters would need to renew their status every two years. Currently, these voters receive an absentee ballot for every election for as long as they need it.
- <u>SB 209</u> / AB 177(LRB 1585) Returning Absentee Ballots/Ballot Drop Boxes: Requires voters to either mail or drop off their absentee ballots at the permanent location of the clerk's office. It allows a municipal clerk to authorize the use of a drop box but limits it to a location that is attached to the municipal clerk's permanent office. It also sets out standards for the drop boxes, including that they be tamper resistant, moisture-proof, satisfy the accessibility requirements under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, and be emptied once each day at 9

a.m. by the clerk or deputy clerk in public view.

- <u>SB 212</u> (LRB 2033) Defects on Absentee Ballot Certificates: Prohibits a municipal clerk from correcting a defect on the completed absentee ballot certificate envelope. If a certificate envelope has a defect, the clerk must post a notification of the defect on the elector's voter information page on the MyVote website. This bill also adds to the list of what is considered election fraud from election officials to include intentionally assisting or causing the casting or counting of a vote or the receipt of a registration that is invalid as well as several other factors.
- <u>SB 213</u> Expanding DAs prosecuting power over elections
- <u>SB 214</u> (LRB-2284) Early canvassing of absentee ballots, issuance of presidential ballots, combined polling places, timeline for sending or transmitting absentee ballots: This bill allows municipal clerks to start canvassing the absentee ballots the day before the election. This bill authorizes any city, village, or town with a population of less than 35,000 to enter into an agreement to share a polling place with an adjacent city, village, or town also having a population of less than 35,000. Transportation is already a significant barrier for many voters, combining polling sites would only serve to magnify this challenge.
- <u>SB230</u> This bill allows a nursing home or assisted living facility resident and a patient in a hospital, or his or her guardian or health care agent, to designate an essential visitor to visit and provide support for the resident or patient. The bill requires a nursing home, assisted living facility, or hospital to also allow a member of the clergy to visit a resident or patient.
- <u>SB17</u> Increased penalties for crimes against elder persons; restraining orders for elder persons; freezing assets of a defendant charged with financial exploitation of an elder person; sexual assault of an elder person; physical abuse of an elder person; and providing a penalty.
- <u>SB18</u> Expediting criminal proceedings when a victim or witness is an elder person and preserving the testimony of a crime victim or witness who is an elder person.
- <u>SB19</u> Financial exploitation of vulnerable adults.
- <u>SB20</u> Financial exploitation of vulnerable adults with securities accounts, violations of the Wisconsin Uniform Securities Law, granting rule-making authority, and providing a penalty.
- <u>Wisconsin Act 9</u> Pharmacy benefit managers, prescription drug benefits, and granting rule-making authority (Signed into Law).
- <u>Assembly Bill 786/Senate Bill 734</u> establishes mandatory initial training requirements for guardians before they are appointed. (This bill has passed the Assembly and is awaiting action in the Senate.)
- Other proposals to watch election law changes to be proposed soon.

Wisconsin State Public Meeting Notices

Wisconsin Council on Mental Health Meeting of the Legislative and Policy

Committee

Thursday, April 8, 2021 12:30 PM

via Zoom Webinar <u>https://dhswi.zoom.us/j/85480834127?</u> <u>pwd=YnpuU25rUjFYbmFablZ6ZXdCRTRWZz09</u> Webinar ID: 854 8083 4127 Phone conference: 1-312-626-6799 Passcode: 684368

Milwaukee County Public Meeting Notices

Milwaukee County Commission on Aging Advocacy Committee Meeting Monday, April 5, 2021 at 1:30 p.m. Join on your computer or mobile app: <u>Click here to join the meeting</u> Or call in (audio only): <u>414-436-3530</u>, Phone Conference ID: 447 124 523#

Milwaukee County Aging Advisory Council Meeting Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 1:30 p.m. Join on your computer or mobile app: <u>Click here to join the meeting</u> Or call in (audio only): <u>414-436-3530</u> Phone Conference ID: 873 718 679#

Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force

Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. Register Here: <u>Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force (milwaukeemhtf.org)</u>

Milwaukee County Commission on Aging Meeting Friday, April 23, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. Check the County Legislative Information Center: <u>Milwaukee County - Calendar</u> (legistar.com)

Milwaukee County Select Committee on Senior Centers Meeting Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. Join on your computer or mobile app: <u>Click here to join the meeting</u> Or call in (audio only): <u>414-436-3530</u>, Phone Conference ID: 156 521 111#

Milwaukee County Area Aging Needs Virtual Listening Session Friday, April 30, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. Join by Zoom - TBD

Utility Shut-off Moratorium in Wisconsin will End on April 15th. Wisconsin's annual moratorium on cold weather disconnections, for utility service used for home heating is in effect until April 15, 2021. Water, electric, and gas utilities seeking to request the ability to disconnect during the winter moratorium will have to file a disconnection plan with the PSC and receive approval before they can proceed with disconnections. <u>Your bill is still due</u>.

If you need help with utility disconnections during the COVID-19 outbreak, call the PSC Consumer Affairs team at: 1-800-225-7729. Apply for Energy Assistance through Milwaukee County: <u>Schedule an appointment now</u> or call (414) 270-4-MKE! <u>Click Here to Apply for Energy Assistance</u>. Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, in-person applications are not being conducted.

COVID-19+ Transportation Available

If you are symptomatic for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone who is, don't put your friends, family or neighbors at risk. Free rides to healthcare appointments, COVID-19 testing sites, or isolation facilities in Milwaukee County are available through the Department on Aging.

Call the Aging Resource Center to request a COVID-19 related ride at: (866) 229-9695.

BURIAL ASSISTANCE DUE TO COVID-19

FEMA is offering reimbursement to families who had a family member pass away from COVID-19. FEMA is reimbursing up to \$7,000.00 for funerals due to COVID-19. Please keep funeral documentation. COVID-19 Funeral Assistance FEMA.gov <u>https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance</u>.

ACA Marketplace Special Enrollment Period Extended to August 15, 2021

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance marketplace special enrollment period has been extended to August 15, 2021. Consumers now have until August 15 to sign up for a health insurance plan through the marketplace. Consumers who are eligible and enroll under the SEP will be able to select a plan with coverage that could start as soon as the first month after plan selection, and current enrollees will be able to change to any plan available to them in their area. Consumers may sign up by visiting healthcare.gov or by calling 1-800-318-2596 (TTY: 1-855-889-4325).

For more information visit: <u>https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/03/23/2021-special-enrollment-period-access-extended-to-august-15-on-healthcare-gov-for-marketplace-coverage.html</u>

HOUSING RELIEF AVAILABLE

Rental Resource Center Launches in Milwaukee County

On December 1, nine organizations in Milwaukee County launched the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center, a one-stop shop for tenants and landlords in need of assistance to maintain or provide stable rental housing. The mission of the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center (MKE RHRC) is to serve as a trusted convener for the rental housing system and to connect people to resources, education, and services that help prevent eviction, regardless of age, family situation, or housing status.

GOTO: <u>www.RentHelpMKE.org</u> A decision tree will help direct website visitors to the appropriate information or partner organization for assistance, and a central intake form will allow people to submit their information to get help quickly or call: (414) 895-RENT (414-895-7368). Help line services will be available in English or Spanish. The email address <u>info@renthelpmke.org</u> will also be available for those who prefer to communicate electronically or avoid using minutes on a mobile phone plan.

National Federal Eviction Moratorium

Learn About Protections and Steps Renters Must Take!

A federal eviction moratorium issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is in effect until June 30, 2021. A "covered person" is any tenant, lessee, or resident of a residential property who provides to their landlord, the owner of the residential property, or other person with a legal right to pursue eviction, a <u>declaration under penalty of perjury</u> that: (1) The individual has used best efforts to obtain all available government assistance for rent or housing;

(2) The individual either (i) expects to earn no more than \$99,000 in annual income for Calendar Year 2020 (or no more than \$198,000 if filing a joint tax return), (ii) was not required to report any income in 2019 to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, or (iii) received an Economic Impact Payment (stimulus check) pursuant to Section 2201 of the CARES Act;

(3) The individual is unable to pay the full rent or make a full housing payment due to substantial loss of household income, loss of compensable hours of work or wages, a lay-off, or extraordinaryout-of-pocket medical expenses;

(4) The individual is using best efforts to make timely partial payments that are as close to the full payment as the individual's circumstances may permit, taking into account other nondiscretionary expenses; and

(5) Eviction would likely render the individual homeless— or force the individual to move into and live in close quarters in a new congregate or shared living setting—because the individual has no other available housing options.

A tenant, lessee, or resident of a residential property must provide a completed and signed copy of the declaration, as described above, to their landlord, owner of the residential property where they live, or

other person who has a right to have them evicted or removed from where they live. The declaration may be signed and transmitted either electronically or by hard copy. Each adult listed on the lease, rental agreement, or housing contract should complete the declaration. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for one member of the residence to provide an executed declaration on behalf of other adult residents party to the lease, rental agreement, or housing contract at issue. A sample declaration can be <u>downloaded here</u>. For more assistance, see the legal resources below.

Mortgage Payment Assistance

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) announced the third extension of its foreclosure and eviction moratorium through June 30, 2021, for homeowners with FHA-insured single family mortgages covered under the Coronavirus Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The moratorium continues to direct mortgage servicers to:

- Halt all new foreclosure actions and suspend all foreclosure actions currently in process for FHA-insured single family properties, excluding legally vacant or abandoned properties; and
- Cease all evictions of persons from FHA-insured single family properties, excluding actions to evict occupants of legally vacant or abandoned properties.
- Homeowners with FHA-insured mortgages should continue to make their mortgage payments during the foreclosure and eviction moratorium if they are able to do so, or seek mortgage payment forbearance pursuant to the CARES Act from their mortgage servicer, if needed.

Pursuant to the CARES Act, FHA requires mortgage servicers to:

- Offer borrowers with FHA-insured mortgages delayed mortgage payment forbearance when the borrower requests it, with the option to extend the forbearance for up to a year. FHA does not require a lump sum payment at the end of the forbearance period.
- Assess borrowers who receive COVID-19 forbearance for its special COVID-19 National Emergency Standalone Partial Claim before the end of the

forbearance period. The COVID-19 National Emergency Standalone Partial Claim puts all deferred mortgage payment amounts owed into a junior lien which is only repaid when the borrower sells the home, refinances the mortgage, or the mortgage is otherwise extinguished.

• Assess borrowers who are not eligible for the COVID-19 National Emergency Standalone Partial Claim for one of FHA's COVID-19 expanded home retention solutions announced on July 8, 2020.

Area banks, credit unions and mortgage holding companies are offering a variety of customer assistance programs that will allow borrowers to suspend mortgage payments for up to 180 days without facing fees, penalties or hits to their credit score in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Residents <u>must contact your servicer to request a payment</u> <u>plan</u>. A list of participating area financial institutions can be found at Take Root Milwaukee's website: <u>https://takerootmilwaukee.com/have-your-mortgage-payments-postponed/</u>. If you are not sure who your servicer is, or if you need additional help with managing your finances during this time, please contact GreenPath Financial Wellness at 877-290-6974 or <u>request a call here</u>.

FREE LEGAL RESOURCES for Older Adults

Senior LAW – Legal Action of Wisconsin

SeniorLAW provides free legal services to older adults in Milwaukee County. Attorneys are prepared to assist individuals with both eviction and foreclosure defense. SeniorLAW is a program of Legal Action of Wisconsin funded through the Older Americans Act by the Milwaukee County Department on Aging. Any older adult 60+ can access legal services through SeniorLAW.

Call SeniorLAW at 855-947-2529 or 414-278-1222 Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee

The Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee provides free legal services to low-income residents of Milwaukee County. LASM is prioritizing housing matters. For new cases, complete an online intake form at https://lasmilwaukee.com/intake/ or leave a message at (414) 727-5300.

Metro Milwaukee Mediation Services

Mediation is a fair and neutral process where parties have the assistance of a trained mediator to discuss solutions to a disagreement or dispute. Mediate Milwaukee provides free mediation services in Milwaukee County to help parties in the following situations:

- Mortgage Foreclosure
- Eviction
- Landlord-Tenant Disputes

Foreclosure and Landlord-Tenant mediation services are still available to assist by phone! Call 414-939-8800. <u>https://mediatewisconsin.com/</u>.

Milwaukee Justice Center / Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic

Volunteer Lawyers are available to meet one on one to provide free confidential brief legal advice on civil legal matters including housing. Legal advice and information, but

not legal representation, will be provided to the client during a one-hour online Zoom session. Call <u>414-278-3965</u> to schedule a remote appointment.

Take care, be safe, and happy Spring! Dan

Daniel Idzikowski *Program and Policy Coordinator* Milwaukee County Division on Aging

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Committed to the Independence and Dignity of Older Adults Through Advocacy, Leadership and Service