



Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes April 5, 2021

Members Present

Commissioner Shirley Sharp, Chair
Commissioner John Griffith, Vice Chair
Barbara Bechtel
Maureen Conrad
Sandra Dotson
Sopheya Farrell
Commissioner Jason Haas
David Hoffman
Sally Lindner
William Meunier
Gary Mikolajczyk
Elliott Moeser
Harold Oemig
Sherie Tussler
Cindy Van Vreede
Janice Wilberg

Members Excused

Bob Haase
Debra Jupka
Gary Sprong

Milwaukee County Staff

Andrew Bethke
Daniel Idzikowski
Pam Mathews
Vonda Nyang
Carrie Vallejo
Nina Yang

Guests

Cheryl Adams
Christie Carter
Marisol Cervera
Melva Darrough
Pat Dunn
Thomas Gossett
Beth Hengst
Kate Hudson
Matthew Hayes
Kent Mayfield
Cathy Wood

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Commissioner Sharp called the Advocacy Committee to order on Monday, April 5, 2021 at 1:30 pm. Idzikowski called the roll and a quorum was present.

II. APPROVAL of the February and March ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Approve the February 1, 2021 and March 1, 2021 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes as presented.

ACTION: Approved Unanimously (Griffith, Mikolajczyk second).

III. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS

Idzikowski reported out on updates. No action was taken by the Committee in March due to lack of a quorum. Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 which included substantial funding for programs under the Older Americans Act, as well as direct allocations to counties. Milwaukee County is expected to receive \$183 million in direct relief that does not have to pass through the state. These allocations were directly responsive to the Commission on Aging's request to our Congressional delegation. Idzikowski encouraged participants to

thank their members for these allocations under ARPA and to begin to consider how we might advocate to utilize some direct ARPA funding for older adults in Milwaukee County.

Regarding the ongoing Public Health Emergency, the Wisconsin Supreme Court struck down the Governor's current PHE declaration as unconstitutional because it was not affirmed by the state legislature. Discussion ensued on how this might affect Wisconsin's qualification for enhanced SNAP (Foodshare) benefits.

Motion: Request Milwaukee County's state legislative delegation to act expeditiously to pass new legislation affirming the Public Health Emergency in Wisconsin, without tying that declaration to any additional conditions or restrictions on the Governor's powers.

Action: Passed unanimously (Griffith, Mikolajczyk).

Tussler commented that the Hunger Task Force had been in contact with officials in the Biden Administration who indicated that they were working on revising the rule to allow more time for states to return to usual levels of SNAP benefits as state PHE's end. Thus, she counseled to wait on forwarding this resolution.

IV. RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY

County Executive David Crowley appeared by video explaining Milwaukee County's ongoing commitment to provide educational opportunities on racial equity in furtherance of the County's vision to become the healthiest county in Wisconsin by achieving racial equity. Members will be informed how they can participate in future training opportunities through the Milwaukee County Office of African Affairs.

V. LEGISLATIVE & POLICY UPDATES (DISCUSSION & ACTION)

A. Federal Aging Policy Briefing

COVID-19 Response Bills: The new COVID-19 response bill, the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) contains increased funding for Title IIIC Older American Act programs as well as direct funding for counties and additional support for vaccination of older adults is included in this bill.

Wilberg asks for explanation of the process for distribution of the ARPA funding. Idzikowski explains that additional funding under the OAA will be funneled through WI-DHS to each of the Area Agencies on Aging (MCDA is one) and our share of that additional funding will be based upon the approved WI OAA distribution formula. In terms of the direct allocation to Milwaukee County, Haas notes that the County Board has passed a resolution asking for oversight of this funding. Matthews notes guidance has not yet been released by the U.S. Treasury and the County Executive's office is awaiting guidance before considering uses of the ARPA direct funding. Once guidance is issued, the County Budget Office will analyze it and make some recommendations.

The Biden Administration is proposing a very large infrastructure related bill. The Committee might consider the types of infrastructure that are of interest to older adults

such as broadband access and senior centers. Griffith notes that we need additional funding for caregivers and caregiving infrastructure, given the increase in aging.

FY2022 Federal Appropriations: The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging has drafted letter requesting appropriations under the Older Americans Act as follows: Increase funding for all Older Americans Act programs and services. Of particular importance are the following supportive and caregiver services within the Act, administered at the Administration for Community Living, which need sustained investment to meet the growing need of older adults:

- o Title III B Home and Community-Based Supportive Services, \$785 million
- o Title VI Grants for Native American Aging Programs, \$70.4 million for Part A (nutrition and supportive services) and \$21.6 million for Part C (family caregiver support);
- o Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program, \$284 million;
- o Title III D Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, \$50m;
- o \$1m to the Administration on Aging for a National Resource Center on Engaging Older Adults to respond to the increasing incidence of social isolation among older adults
- o \$75m for research and innovation center at the Administration on Aging;
- o Title VII Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, \$35 million.

Motion: Send letter of support for n4a's request for continued increases in Older Americans Act funds in FFY 2022 to Milwaukee County's Congressional delegation.

Action: Carries unanimously (Sharp, Wilberg seconds).

B. State Legislative Issues:

Legislation pending: A series of bills restricting absentee voting or changing the process for voting have been introduced, including changing the process of declaring oneself "indefinitely confined". A summary of these bills by the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition is included in the packet. Griffith encourages other members to review this information and to contact their individual representatives to express their concerns.

Milwaukee County Legislative Issues: Supervisor Haas notes there is not much happening at the County level. Griffith notes that we have had 1263 individuals pass from COVID-19 in Milwaukee County and we need to think about how to memorialize them, perhaps through the Parks Department. Most of these individuals were older adults. Haas suggests Park People.

VI. 2022-23 WISCONSIN STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

Idzikowski reviewed the process for commenting on the Wisconsin State Budget. He indicated that written testimony reflecting the budget priorities of the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging would be submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance. Testimony will also be provided by Commissioners at the virtual Joint Finance Committee hearing to be held on April 28th. Submitted testimony will include Dementia Care Specialist expansion statewide, increased support for caregivers, additional ADRC core funding, & transportation aid increase by 2.5%.

VII. COMMISSION ON AGING PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

Idzikowski shares ideas for broad priorities at the federal, state, and local level.

Federal: 1) Increase Funding for Older Americans Act Programs and Local Government services that support older adults; 2) Ensure Fair Distribution of COVID-19 Relief, Treatment and Vaccination for older adults; 3) Improve Access to Community Life for Older Adults through Age Friendly Infrastructure, Transportation and Long Term Supports and Services. Tussler asks to exchange word “fair” for “equitable”.

State: 1) Expand Medicaid to cover all Wisconsin residents at or below 138% of FPL under the ACA; 2) Advance the Fair Deal Initiative and Increased State Revenue Sharing; 3) Increase Funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Affiliated Programs; 4) Maintain Voting Access for Older Adults and Ensure Fair Redistricting.

Meunier comments that even the 138% threshold is too low. Should be at least 250% of FPL. Idzikowski explains that this is in line with the increased Medicaid match available under the ACA. Tussler notes we should clarify that this provision only pertains to our support of Medicaid expansion. We can always advocate for additional Medicaid expansion later.

Local: 1) Preserve County Levy Funded Maintenance of Effort for Older Adult Services and Supports; 2) Improve Senior Centers and Senior Center programming or Multi-Purpose Access Points; 3) Incorporate Opportunities for Advocacy in 2022-24 Milwaukee County AAA plan. Griffith states that we should include a priority for replacing the Kelly Senior Center. Idzikowski notes that the Commission has established the Select Committee on Senior Center for the purpose of prioritizing these needs and the Advocacy Committee should defer to whatever recommendations come out of that committee.

Idzikowski suggests rewording # 2: Support Improvements and Enhancements of Milwaukee County Senior Centers and Senior Center Programming in accordance with the Select Committee on Senior Centers.

MOTION: To support the 2021 Public Policy Priorities as Presented and Amended.

ACTION: Passes unanimously. Griffith, Mikolajczyk seconds)

VIII. VOTING and the 2021 SPRING ELECTION

Idzikowski reviews the various voting proposals introduced in the Wisconsin State Legislature. Emphasizes that it is also very important to exercise your right to vote to demonstrate the importance of the franchise to older adults. The Division on Aging will again provide free rides to the polls for any older adult who needs that assistance.

Idzikowski references the Disability Vote Coalition handout. Notes that the DVC is calling for advocacy on these provisions, including testimony at hearings and contacting local legislators. Summarizes SB206/AB180 (indefinitely confined voter definition); SB203/AB192 (ballot collection); SB204 (no automatic ballot/application mailing to indefinitely confined voters); SB205/AB179 (nursing home staff can't help people vote) SB209/AB177 (drop boxes); SB 212 (prohibits fixing defects on ballots by clerks); SB 214 (combining voting sites).

MOTION: Send a Letter Opposing all of these provisions to our State Legislative delegation.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Griffith, Mikolajczyk seconds).

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS & ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES:

Virtual **Aging Advocacy Days** have been scheduled for May 10th and May 12th. Register at www.GWAAR.org. Encourages all members to sign up. Idzikowski will also provide an overview of the Wisconsin State Budget: April 12th, 16th, and 20th. Check MCDA webpage for more details. Joint Finance Committees have been scheduled, including the virtual hearing on April 28th. Area Aging Plan Survey available online. Conrad notes that there is a Healthy Living with Diabetes workshop that will be held in April. Register on MCDA website.

X. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at **3:08 p.m.**

MOTION: Adjourn.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Mikolaczyk, Wilberg seconds).

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held virtually at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, May 3, 2021.