



MILWAUKEE COUNTY  
Department on Aging

**Commission on Aging - Advocacy Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
May 3, 2021**

**Members Present**

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

**Members Excused**

Barbara Bechtel  
Bob Haase  
David Hoffman  
William Meunier  
Gary Sprong

Sherie Tussler

**Milwaukee County Staff**

Andrew Bethke  
Daniel Idzikowski  
Pam Mathews  
Carrie Vallejo  
Nina Yang

**Guests**

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

**I. CALL TO ORDER & Introductions**

Commissioner Sharp called the Advocacy Committee to order on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 1:30 pm. Idzikowski called the roll and a quorum was present.

**II. Review of the April 5, 2021 Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes**

**MOTION:** Approve the April 5, 2021 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes as presented.

**ACTION:** Approved Unanimously (Conrad, Mikolajczyk seconded).

**III. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS**

Idzikowski reported out on updates.

Sent a letter of support for n4a's request for appropriations in the 2022 federal budget to Milwaukee County's federal delegation. Completed MC Commission on Aging Policy Priorities and will be posted on MCDA website and forwarded to the Committee. Sent letter opposing pending voting bills to Wisconsin State Senators representing Milwaukee County. Received response from Senators Carpenter and Larsen indicating they would oppose this legislation.

#### IV. RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY

No presentation on racial equity was made this month. Milwaukee County racial equity trainings will be made available to Commission and Committee members. Note: Governor Evers included the creation of an equity ambassador position within each State agency and to fund a health equity grant program in the 2021-2023 Wisconsin Executive Budget, but each of these items were removed from consideration by the Joint Finance Committee.

#### V. LEGISLATIVE & POLICY UPDATES (DISCUSSION & ACTION)

Vice Chair Griffith welcomes any federal or state legislative representatives to introduce themselves and comment on any pending legislation.

##### A. Federal Aging Policy

**N4a National Aging Policy conference:** Several members of the Commission on Aging and Advocacy Committee attended this conference earlier this month. Idzikowski notes that n4a's 2021 federal policy brief was posted for members and he reviewed highlights:

- Caregiving & Caregiver Support
- Technology Access to Overcome Isolation
- Older Americans Act
- Medicaid Waiver Home and Community Based Services (in WI: FamilyCare, IRIS, Partnership & PACE)
- Dementia Care & Dementia Friendly Communities
- National Family Caregiver Support Program
- Specialized Transportation Services & Coordination
- Increase benefits in Medicare such as eye care & dental

**ARPA:** The new COVID-19 response bill, the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) contains increased funding (almost 2x) for all Titles of the Older Americans Act, including socialization, nutrition, wellness, and caregiver programs. We will have 2-3 years to spend down this additional funding. N4a is advocating with Congress that the OAA funding increase be incorporated into the annual OAA appropriation. ACL is working on guidance to send funding to States (DHS) which will then pass it along to MCDA. ARPA also included direct funding for counties and additional support for vaccinations and some infrastructure is included in this bill. Preliminary guidance from US Treasury just released. Opportunity for comment on Treasury guidance.

**ACL:** Alison Barkoff new US Assistant Secretary for Aging and Administrator of the Agency for Community Living is a strong aging and disability advocate.

**FoodShare (SNAP):** Issue in Wisconsin resolved by Federal Nutrition Service which agreed to amend interpretation of public health declaration and accepting DHS Secretary Timberlake's new "declaration" as sufficient to continue enhanced FoodShare benefits.

**Hunger Task Force Updates:** Supplemental Benefits \$56 - \$72 million in monthly supplemental benefits will continue; Commodity Food Program (Stockbox) will receive a 15% of fresh and frozen foods available in the next month – register through the Hunger Task Force; Farmer Market Vouchers will be available again this summer.

## **B. State Legislative Issues:**

**Voting Restrictions:** 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”. These bills were introduced in both the Senate and Assembly. The Committee sent a letter opposing these bills to members of the State Senate delegation and may wish to do the same for Assembly members in Milwaukee County. Idzikowski encourages other members to review this information and to contact their individual representatives to express their concerns.

Commissioner Wilberg asks whether it would be possible to ask Senator’s Kooyenga, Carpenter and Larsen to our next meeting to have a dialogue about these voting issues. Griffith concurs – states that should extend invitation to all members of the state delegation and County Board members. Idzikowski notes that this invitation is already sent to all federal, state, and local legislators. Moeser concurs with Wilberg and notes that the members may need to go to Madison to meet with legislative members directly. Griffith asks all Committee members to reach out directly to their legislators to encourage participation in our Advocacy Committee meetings.

**Milwaukee County Legislative Issues:** Supervisor Haas is not present and there are no items of note to present.

## **VI. 2021-23 WISCONSIN STATE BUDGET**

**Medicaid Expansion.** Mikolajczyk commented that the Joint Finance Committee is poised to remove the proposed expansion of Medicaid under the ACA from the Wisconsin State Budget. This expansion would have provided Wisconsin with an additional \$1.2 billion in federal Medicaid funding, and provide Medicaid coverage to an additional 92,000 Wisconsinites.

**Joint Finance Committee Hearings.** Idzikowski noted that Commissioners Sharp and Pitchford Nicholas, as well as ADRC Chair Pat Bruce testified at the Wisconsin Joint Committee on Finance public hearing in April. They covered a range of concerns including Medicaid expansion, ADRC, Transportation, and Caregiver Support. Written testimony, as well as Commission on Aging’s 2021-23 State Budget Priorities were submitted to Joint Finance. Idzikowski commends these members for providing direct testimony.

The JCF has begun to schedule sessions for specific sections of the budget. In addition to Medicaid expansion, voting provisions, and broadband expansion the JCF is poised to strip out 300 provisions of the Executive Budget and begin to work from a base budget on most items. This includes removing tax provisions, such as expansion of EITC, Homestead tax exemption, and reduction of the Manufacturers tax credit. Idzikowski explains the State Budget process.

Wilberg asks if the Milwaukee County Board has taken a position supporting Medicaid expansion this year? Idzikowski states that he does not believe they have done so.

Idzikowski asks the Committee how they would like to proceed with engaging with the Joint Committee on Finance moving forward. Griffith suggests more engagement with the media. Wilberg concurs and suggests that the media receive copies of our positions. Suggests that we have just have two members join us at the Commission. In particular ask senator Kooyenga, Darling and Johnson. Request them to explain their positions on Medicaid expansion. Conrad emphasizes that the Committee should hear from legislators that don't necessarily agree with the Committee's position. Moeser states we could either invite these Senators to join us at a special meeting of the Committee, or he could organize a delegation to Madison to represent the Committee in a meeting with them. Mikolaczyk notes that it would be most helpful if constituents from the respective districts meet with their representatives. Moeser offers to organize a trip to Madison to meet with JCF delegates and Griffith suggests that Moeser take the lead in organizing this effort and keep the members informed. Some discussion follows with Conrad and Oemig suggesting connecting with media.

Idzikowski notes that the WAAN Aging Advocacy Days will occur on May 10<sup>th</sup>, with virtual legislative districts for May 12<sup>th</sup>. Encourages all Committee members to sign up and participate in these Aging Advocacy Days – there will be an opportunity to meet with your senator and assembly member on May 12<sup>th</sup>. However, WAAN did not specifically vote to support Medicaid Expansion and this item is not among the provisions that will be addressed. Idzikowski strongly encourages every member of the Advocacy Committee to sign up for the WAAN Advocacy Days on GWAARs website: <https://gwaar.org/aging-advocacy-online-2021>. Idzikowski also suggest writing an op-ed on Medicaid expansion for local newspapers.

**MOTION:** To authorize Commissioner Moeser to lead a delegation of Committee members to meet with members of the Wisconsin Joint Committee on Finance from Milwaukee County to present the State Budget Priorities of the Commission on Aging.

**ACTION:** Passes unanimously (Moeser, Mikolajczyk).

## **VII. COMMISSION ON AGING PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES**

Idzikowski notes that the full Commission on Aging Public Policy Priorities have been finalized and will be posted on MCDA's website.

## **VIII. 2022 MILWAUKEE COUNTY BUDGET**

Idzikowski notes that he has invited Matt Fortman, the Milwaukee County DHHS Budget Director, to present at the next Advocacy Committee meeting regarding the County Budget process and the Aging Division budget in particular.

## **IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS & ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES:**

Griffith notes over \$24.8 million was awarded for 58 projects to help expand broadband internet to unserved and underserved areas of the state, although none of the grants were for Milwaukee County. 2022 Broadband expansion grant program applications will open soon.

Starting on May 12, 2021, providers participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program can begin enrolling eligible households into the program to receive EBB-supported service. Households will also be able to check their eligibility directly by using the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier consumer portal available at [www.GetEmergencyBroadband.org](http://www.GetEmergencyBroadband.org).

The program offers temporary discounts of up to \$50 per month off of eligible households' internet access bills. In some cases, low-income households can also get discounts on a laptop, desktop, or tablet computer. The broadband providers will receive the money directly for providing service to an eligible household.

WAAN Virtual **Aging Advocacy Days** have been scheduled for May 10<sup>th</sup> and May 12<sup>th</sup>. Register at [www.GWAAR.org](http://www.GWAAR.org). Encourage all Committee members and older adults to sign up.

Area on Aging Plan Survey available online at the MCDA website or can request a hard survey copy by contacting Idzikowski.

**X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & MEETING DATES**

Conrad wants to share information on out-of-state landlords in the City of Milwaukee.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at **3:00 p.m.**

MOTION: Adjourn.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Mikolaczyk, Oemig seconds).

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held virtually at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, June 7, 2021.