

**COUNTY OF**



**ALLEGHENY**

**RICH FITZGERALD**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**Pennsylvania House Committee on Aging and Older Adult Services**

Informational Meeting on Allocation Formula and Hold Harmless

Mildred Morrison, Administrator, Area Agency on Aging

Allegheny County Department of Human Services

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Good morning Chairman Hennessey, Representative Samuelson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mildred Morrison, and I am the Administrator of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this discussion. Finding the best way forward on allocating state resources to AAAs directly affects the lives of the more than 43,000 older adults we serve in Allegheny County, and those of many more thousands across the Commonwealth.

At the outset I want to note that we in Allegheny County, as well as most of the AAAs across Pennsylvania, have expressed our shared interest in a funding formula for Aging services that best meets the needs of all of the Commonwealth's older adults, in particular those who are most vulnerable or disenfranchised. I am not here to propose a particular formula or modification. Rather, I want to highlight the difference made in our community every day by those services which are currently in place due to the law's

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MARC CHERNA, DIRECTOR  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
**AREA AGENCY ON AGING**

441 SMITHFIELD STREET • SECOND FLOOR • PITTSBURGH, PA 15222  
PHONE (412) 350-4234 • TDD (412) 350-2727 • FAX (412) 350-4330 • TOLL FREE (800) 344-4319

“hold harmless” provision, and describe the impact that eliminating that provision would have on those we serve.

The hold harmless provision has enabled our AAA to serve additional older adults in need in our community, and has supported the delivery of a broader base of services to that population. That strengthened foundation has met and anticipated needs that complement the individual’s resources and has collectively been a critical element in the well-being of those older adults.

These funds are used for a variety of functions, including:

- **Lowering the number of older adults on wait lists** for Options Care Management’s direct/in-home services. These are the bath, assistance with dressing and grooming, essential housekeeping, adult day care, home modification and other services not covered by Medicaid. Our waitlist is generally about 300 persons, with an active caseload of approximately 4,600.
- **A fully resourced Older Adult Protective Service operation** including dedicated nurses, traveling consulting psychologists, and a financial exploitation investigator
- **A robust guardianship program** that reduces strain on public safety and judicial system resources by securing short and long term solutions to recurring issues of abuse, neglect and dementia-related self-neglect
- **Congregate and home delivered meals** which address special needs, including daily fresh meals, bi-weekly frozen delivery and specialty meals for Kosher or other

dietary restrictions. Home delivered meals delivered by an observant visitor greatly reduce the need for emergency medical care and delay nursing home placement.

- **Educational and wellness enrichment classes** via the Community College offered at senior centers
- Continuing support of **Chronic Disease Self-Management**
- **Consumer legal counseling** for a wider population in need
- **Transportation** to the senior center of choice
- **Training** of provider agencies in best practices and measurement of outcomes
- A small program to assist **formerly incarcerated seniors** to transition back into the community

Calculations prepared by the Department of Aging indicated that funds available due to the hold harmless represent just under 21% of our base funding in Allegheny County. Base funds, approximately \$30 million, comprise more than 60% of the entire AAA budget. Were the hold harmless provision to be eliminated, we would expect significant reductions – and, in certain cases, elimination – of the programs I just described. In addition to these changes, we would expect several additional system-wide consequences of losing these funds. These include:

- **Rapid shrinkage in our Senior Center network**, which would result in increased isolation among our community's older adults, and fewer opportunities to provide information and assistance, including benefits counseling, so elders can proactively manage their lives

- **Reduction in Congregate Care lunch sites**
- **Elimination of subsidies for medical trips** for non-Medicaid consumers, including frequent chemotherapy and kidney dialysis visits
- **Significant reductions in our Domiciliary Care program**, our adult foster care program which serves elders as well as individuals involved in our Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability services. These reductions would increase need for more complex services for this population, including comparatively expensive group homes.
- **Reduced outreach and community engagement**, including less attendance at community events, health fairs, and legislative outreach fairs and expos.

Funding changes that result in disruption, reduction and elimination of the kinds of services described above would be detrimental to the health, well-being and independence of Allegheny County's older adults. What's more, as you can see, nearly all of these services are designed to prevent longer-term, more intensive, and ultimately more costly system involvement, including emergency room visits, involvement of public safety, or avoidable nursing home care.

While some will agree and others disagree with the administration's plans to privatize the lottery, there is no room for disagreement on the necessity of additional funding for home and community based aging services. Demographic and economic projections tell us that Pennsylvania faces growing numbers of elders, living far longer and many with fewer financial resources that will be utilized with years of life still ahead. To honor

our commitments to meet the needs, not the wants, of our citizens requires sufficient resources. The additional dollars contained in the proposed budget provide a great opportunity to meet those needs and to distribute those new resources in ways that offset any disparity in the application of the current funding formula. Such an approach would eliminate the real and perceived negatives of hold harmless on our neighbors while assuring a stable base.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to participate in this important conversation.