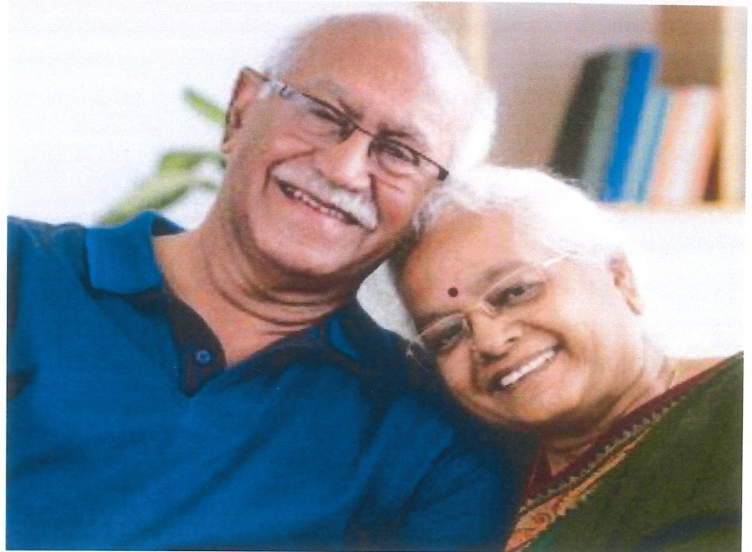


Montgomery County, Maryland
Commission on Aging
Annual Report 2017



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**



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MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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Letter from the Chair of the Commission on Aging

March 2018

The Honorable Isiah Leggett
The Honorable Hans Riemer

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging is pleased to present its Annual Report for 2017. The Report describes the activities of the Commission as an advisor to County Government and as an advocate for the interests and concerns of older adults and their families residing in the County. The Commission on Aging effectively carries out its responsibilities, including serving as the Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging as mandated by the Older Americans Act.

The Commission on Aging continues to monitor the County's progress on achieving the goals and vision of the Senior Agenda. The Commission was especially pleased that the year ended with the implementation of the WHO/AGE Friendly Montgomery County (AFMC) initiative, an administrative framework requiring county-wide (including partnering with businesses, academia, hospitals and home and community-based services, transportation and housing providers, etc.) cross functional communication to develop, coordinate and implement an aging service plan. The Commission had a lead role in exploring and recommending the WHO Age-Friendly structure that was accepted by the County based on two Commission summer studies and presentations to the Commission by experts in the Age-Friendly arena. The former Chair of the Commission chaired the Age-Friendly Strategic Plan workgroup and other Commissioners were members of the workgroup. They provided a framework for an Age-Friendly structure that was accepted by the County. To date the County has created the diverse Age-Friendly Montgomery County Advisory Group (AFMAG) consisting of representatives from county businesses, non-profits, academia, county departments, boards and commissions, fire safety, police, emergency management, hospitals and community-based services, communications, parks and recreation and others. The County also created 10 Age-Friendly Workgroups based on Age-Friendly domains. The Chair of the Commission serves on the AFMAG and members of the Commission serve on the Age-Friendly Workgroups. In addition, the Commission reviewed its four standing committees and made changes to the scope of the committees, where appropriate, to better align them with the age-friendly domains.

The Commission acknowledges the challenges presented by the transition of leadership at the State level and the impact of the deficits in the FY17 County budget. While budget recommendations this year focused on continuing to improve and enhance both current programs and new efforts, we remain sensitive to economic issues, affecting the County. We are also proud of the partnership we maintain with various Boards, Commissions and Government Agencies and will continue collaborative efforts toward shared goals in 2018.

The Commission thanks County Executive Leggett for your strong leadership and committed actions on behalf of the County's aging population, and the County Council for their interest and support that they provided to maintain and expand programs that serve older adults.

We also give sincere thanks and recognition to the Director of Health and Human Services, Uma S. Ahluwalia and Director of Recreation, Gabriel Albornoz, who co-chair the Subcabinet on Senior Vital Living (now termed the Age-Friendly Montgomery Advisory Group) for their leadership and responsiveness to the issues raised by the Commission.

Finally, the Commission expresses its respect and deep appreciation to two individuals who have provided exceptional support and wise guidance, Dr. John (Jay) Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services and Dr. Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging. Like so many outstanding professionals working for the County, their contributions, invaluable to the Commission have contributed enormously to the wellbeing of older adults in the County. The Commission also acknowledges the outstanding support provided by the following Aging and Disability Services staff: Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator; Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator; Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Program Manager; Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator; Lylie Fisher, Caregiver Coordinator and Dennis Linders of the County State Office Strategy and Planning.

Sincerely,



Noelle Heyman, Chair

Commission Officers

Noelle Heyman, Chair
Isabelle Schoenfeld, 1st Vice Chair
Stephanie Edelstein, 2nd Vice Chair
Revathi Vikram, Treasurer
Hileia Seeger, Secretary

Committee and Group Chairs

Aging in Place and Community: Miriam Kelty
Health and Wellness: Judith Peres and Alan Kaplan
Public Policy: Stephanie Edelstein and John Honig
Seniors Today Task Force: Hillery Tumba
Stakeholders Forum: Amoke Alakoye

Commission Members

Amoke Alakoye Neal Brown Barbara Brubeck David Denton Stephanie Edelstein
Morton Faller Shenita Freeman Georgia S. Guenther Noelle Heyman
John Honig Richard Jourdenais Alan Kaplan Rashid Makhdoom
Karen Maricheau Nanine Meiklejohn Jerry Morenoff Judith Peres
Mary Petrizzo Phyllis Rand Monica H. Schaeffer Isabelle Schoenfeld
Jack Sprague Hillery Tumba Revathi Vikram T. Ryan Wilson Syed Yusuf

Liaisons to Commission on Aging

Age Friendly Montgomery: Marcia Pruzan
Aging and Disability Services: John (Jay) Kenney
Commission on Aging Alumni: Irwin Goldbloom
Commission on People with Disabilities: Seth Morgan
Commission on Veterans Affairs: James Campbell
Department of Housing and Community Affairs: Leslie Marks
Department of Recreation: Jeffrey Bourne and Phil Smakula
Department of Transportation: Denise Isreal and Faisal Khan
Ethnics Affairs Committee: Patricia Lesnick
Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being Seniors (GROWS): Robin Henoeh
Housing Opportunities Commission: Stephanie Moore
I Kaur Foundation: Mirin Phool
Keeping Seniors Safe: Morton Davis

Maryland Commission on Aging: Maria V. Jimenez
Montgomery County Fire and Rescue: Jim Resnick
Montgomery County Parks and Planning: Pamela Zorich
Office of Community Partnerships: Austin Heyman
State's Attorney Office: Kelly Davis and Debbie Feinstein
Vital Living Network: Donna Mason

Aging and Disabilities Services/DHHS Liaisons to Commission on Aging

Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging
Pazit Aviv, Villages Coordinator
Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Coordinator
Lylie Fisher, Caregiver Coordinator
Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator
Jennifer Long, Aging and Disability Resource Line Manager
Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator
Erin Smith, Program Data Manager

Enabling Legislation

The Commission on Aging, established in 1974, was operated under the auspices of the County Council until August 1987, when its operation was transferred to the Executive Branch. Chapter 27, Article III of the Montgomery County Code created the Commission on Aging under the declared policy of the County to:

- Improve conditions of the aging or elderly in the County;
- Work toward the elimination of restrictions that impeded older citizens from full participate in the mainstream of community life: and
- Assist and stimulate all levels of government and the community to be more responsive to the needs of the County's older residents.

In addition, the Commission on Aging serves as the Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging as described in the federal Older Americans Act. Members of the Commission are appointed by the County Executive subject to confirmation by the County Council. Under a section specifying powers and duties of the Commission, there are several provisions outlining a broad spectrum of powers. The following two subsections provide a good example of the breadth of the Commission's power:

The Commission shall have the power...

- (a) To research, assemble, analyze and disseminate pertinent data and educational materials relating to activities and programs, which will assist in meeting the needs and solving the problems of the aging; to cooperate with public and private agencies, organizations, and individuals in identifying and solving the problems of the aging; and to develop and conduct, as appropriate, in cooperation with county government, other services and programs dealing with the problems and needs of the aging.
- (g) To advise and counsel the residents of the county, the County Council, the County Executive and the various departments of county, state and federal governments on matters involving the needs of the aging, and to recommend such procedures, programs or legislation as it may deem necessary and proper to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all persons, regardless of their age.

Commission Membership

The Commission on Aging consists of no fewer than 18 members appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. Members must be County residents of whom a majority shall be age 60 and older. Members include: those who participate in or who are eligible to participate in programs under the Older Americans Act; local elected officials or their designees; individuals who are or who have been active in government, business, industry, labor, community service, religious, social services, education, and representatives of major organizations or agencies concerned with aging.

Area Agency on Aging

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is responsible for the provision of a continuum of home and community-based services and provides staff support to the Commission on Aging (COA). In conjunction with community partners, the AAA is involved in administering County and State grant awards to contractors for services, public education/outreach, networking, and referrals.

AAAs were established under the Federal Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973 to respond to the needs of Americans ages 60 and older in every local community. The AAA strives to develop a range of options that allow older adults to choose the home and community-based services and living arrangements that suit them best. The AAA is part of a national network of over 670 AAAs established under the OAA to improve the quality of life for older persons by a network that maintains a holistic view of aging. The AAA's are mandated to "foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems to serve older individuals...."

- Staff from the Aging and Disability Services Line, (ADRU) a Maryland Access Point, answered 21,207 calls to assist seniors, persons with disabilities and their families, and provide access to information and needed short-and long-term care services offered both by the County and our nonprofit partners.
- The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program conducted 4,041 visits, provided 3,310 information and consultations with individuals, 1,690 consultations with providers, investigated 409 formal complaints and opened 226 cases. The program has a dedicated volunteer corps of 50 individuals serving 227 facilities.
- The Caregiver Support Manager and the Village Coordinator worked with the National Hispanic Council on Aging, TESS Center, and the Community Action Agency to host a two-day workshop for Spanish-speaking community leaders. It was followed up by a caregiver conference for the community at large, that was well-attended and received. Since the event, which occurred in August, the Caregiver Supports and Village Managers and the National Hispanic Council on Aging have partnered to do more outreach in the Hispanic community in Montgomery County.
- The Public Guardianship program served 110 persons in need of protective services as determined by the courts, constituting more than 1,046 face-to-face contacts with these clients. Additionally, the program conducted nine education and training events to more than 200 people. The Public Guardianship program helped residents avoid 50 cases due to preventive assessments and education.
- The Senior Nutrition program served 5,930 participants and provided 437,793 meals, both in congregate sites and through home-delivered meals.
- The AAA, via contracts with the Mobile Dentist, provided dental care and dentures to 108 seniors lacking insurance.
- The Nurse Team conducted over 3,324 Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) evaluations, which are mandated to enable eligible persons to receive community-based long term Medicaid-funded services.
- The AAA currently provides nurse monitoring services (via its contract partners) to over 2,300 Community First Choice clients. These clients receive services via the Community Options Waiver, Community First Choice, or Medical Assistance Personal Care programs.
- The AAA Supports Planning Agency (SPA) currently serves 320 Community First Choice Program participants.

- The Health and Wellness program served over more than 600 individuals through health screening and nearly 1,100 through education sessions which includes our new Medication Management Program, Homemed. The Health and Wellness program also organized physical fitness and exercise sessions through classes such “Bone Builders,” “Matter of Balance and our new “Stepping On” program that served over 2,000 county residents.
- The Mobility and Transportation Manager has used federal funds to promote volunteer driver programs and other transportation options in the County, including Ride-On Buses, Connect-a-Ride, and Escorted Transportation
- The Villages Coordinator has helped to start or expand approximately 34 villages in the County.
- The Caregivers Supports Coordinator has facilitated an Action Group for the County’s Dementia Friendly Initiative in partnership with the Bright Focus Foundation, the Alzheimer’s Association and other numerous partners.
- The Senior Fellow for “Age Friendly Montgomery” facilitated the submission of the Montgomery County three-year strategic plan (FY17, 18, 19) to the World Health Organization/AARP Age Friendly Communities Initiative. ■

Commission on Aging Priorities and Activities

COA and Montgomery County as a Community for a Lifetime Update

The Commission believes that Montgomery County is making progress in becoming a Community for a Lifetime as envisioned by the Senior Agenda, which was developed by the Commission and adopted by the Montgomery County Council in 2012. In keeping with the vision and goals of the Senior Agenda, the Commission continues to focus on quality of life for all older adults in the County.

With support from the County Executive and the County Council, the Commission's past advocacy resulted in adoption of the Senior Agenda; continued funding of essential supports and services such as the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and Senior Center Services; as well as the hiring of a Transportation Coordinator, a Village Coordinator, and a Caregiver Support Coordinator. Significantly, in 2014 and 2015, the Commission explored the World Health Organization's (WHO) certified U.S. Age-Friendly communities and successfully advocated that the County become part of this international network. The County Executive and the County Council supported this endeavor, resulting in the WHO's invitation to the County to engage in the process toward becoming an Age Friendly Community. The Chair of COA serves on the Age-Friendly Montgomery Advisory Group (AFMCAG) and members of the COA serve on the Age-Friendly Montgomery Work Groups. Most recently, the Commission successfully advocated for a part-time Senior Fellow to assist with the Age Friendly Montgomery County initiative.

The Commission's work is ever more important as our older population continues to grow and become more diverse. In 2015, approximately 205,841, or 14%, of County residents were age 60 or older. By 2040, this population is projected to increase by almost 50%, to 307,532. The population is also aging, with the percentage of residents age 75 and older expected to grow from 6% of the population in 2015, to 11% in 2040. The older population of Montgomery County is also growing more diverse. In 2015, 15% of residents age 60 and older were Asian; 13% were Black or African American; and 9% were Hispanic or Latino.

The County is home to significant numbers of low and moderate income elders: 18% of households headed by an individual age 65 and older have income less than \$20,000 per year. Housing costs are an issue, particularly for renters. For 25% of senior homeowners, housing costs exceed 30% of their income, 51% of senior renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent. Approximately 38% of County residents age 60 and older, the majority of whom are women, live alone.

In 2015, 23% of seniors living in the community reported having at least one limitation in performing activities of daily living. Many may require case management, transportation, in-home assistance, dental services, congregate and home-delivered meals, or other services. Respite care is often needed when the senior lives with a caregiver.

The County has also seen an increase in referrals to adult protective services. Referrals increased between FY2012 and FY2016, from 592 cases to 808 cases. The increase in referrals can be attributed in part to a new state law requiring banks to report suspected financial abuse, which now comprise 30% of referrals.

COA Operations

The Commission meets monthly, except during the summer, when members are engaged in Summer Studies focusing on specific issues. Members are expected to serve on one or more Commission Committees: Aging in Place and Community, Communications and Community Outreach, Health and Wellness, and Public Policy. These committees also meet monthly.

To help inform the Commission's advocacy and priority activities, both full Commission and Committee meetings frequently include invited guests who share their expertise on relevant topics. The COA collaborates with other boards, commissions, and committees, as appropriate and welcomes their representatives at its meetings and as members of its committees.

Meetings are also attended by representatives from other Montgomery County Commissions, Boards, Committees, Departments, and Agencies, and other stakeholders. All meetings are open to the public. Commissioners may serve as liaisons to other relevant organizations and groups. Commissioners also meet with the County Executive, County Council Members, Department Directors and staff, State legislators, members of the public, and others in order to advance programs, services, and policies on behalf of County seniors.

The Commission's 2017 activities and priorities, including budget priorities, were informed by the goals and recommendations of the Senior Agenda, Age-Friendly County strategic goals, 2015 Stakeholder Meeting and 2015 Summit on Aging, and recommendations from our 2016 Summer Studies, "Commonalities and Differences in Local Government Approaches for Aging in Community" and "Long-Term Care and Supports: Nursing Home Quality." These priorities were health/mental health, protections for vulnerable adults, and aging in place.

As 2017 came to an end, the Commission engaged in the process of setting priorities for 2018-2019, based on recommendations from the *Summer Study on Affordable Rental Housing for Montgomery County Seniors*, along with information gathered in Committees, discussions at the September Annual Meeting, and other communications with stakeholders.

Bylaws Revision

In 2015, the Commission reviewed and updated the 1998 Bylaws. The draft was submitted to the County Attorney in December 2015. The County Attorney's Office thoroughly reviewed the draft and responded by letter in September 2016. The response provided a comprehensive legal analysis that included detailed recommendations for conforming the draft to the Montgomery County Code provisions governing the Commission. The Commission revised the draft Bylaws in early 2017, taking into consideration the County Attorney's advice. COA Bylaws were formally approved and accepted by the Commission in late 2017.

Policy Advocacy

State Advocacy

In 2017, the Commission, led by the Public Policy Committee, engaged in numerous advocacy-related activities in its priority areas.

COA testified on our 2018 priorities at the Montgomery County Delegation's Joint Priorities Hearing in November 2017. Also, in November, COA hosted our annual Legislative Breakfast for members of the County delegation to the State Legislature (County's State Delegation). At this event, two priorities were highlighted: the need to explore ways in which the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program could better serve Montgomery County, and the need for increased state funding for Adult Protective Services and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

In 2017, the Public Policy Committee reviewed more than three dozen bills filed in the Maryland General Assembly and of interest to Montgomery County seniors. The Committee researched relevant topics, including protection for vulnerable adults and affordable housing (property tax credits), and led the drafting of testimony and position letters. COA advocated to:

- Require financial advisers and brokers to report suspected elder abuse (HB 1149/SB 951).
- Establish a Healthy Aging Program in the Maryland Department of Aging, urging that any such health awareness initiative include oral health care (HB 147).
- Increase the time to conduct an APS investigation from 30 to 60 days (HB 256/SB 260).
- Require Assisted Living Programs to post certain disclosures on their websites (HB 387).
- Establish a Senior Call Check Service and Notification program (HB 601/SB 248).
- Provide tax credits to homeowners who install accessibility features (HB 644/SB 180).
- Require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to cover oral health services (HB 1158).

Several Commission members attended the annual United Seniors of Maryland legislative forum, co-sponsored with AARP Maryland and held in Annapolis. The January 2017 event afforded participants the opportunity to hear from speakers including Secretary of Aging’s Rona Kramer, and to meet with members of the County’s Delegation.

We continue monitoring activities of the Task Force on Long-Term Care Education and Planning, the creation of which was supported by the County’s State Delegation and which aims to provide Marylanders under the age of 50 with the tools needed to understand how to plan and pay for long-term care. We are in full support of the value of this information to our residents.

Legislative Breakfast

The Commission held its annual Legislative Breakfast on November 16, 2017. Members of the County’s State delegation and/or a staff representative, County agency staff, Commissioners, and guests were in attendance. The Breakfast provides the Commission and delegation members the opportunity to share accomplishments of the past year and to identify issues and priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

This year, Commissioners discussed a 2015 COA Summer Study on the Quality of Care in Nursing Homes in Montgomery County and the need to resolve poor nursing home quality of care ratings received by Montgomery County and the State of Maryland. Two legislators followed up on this topic with requests for additional information (provided by the Health Planning, Service, & Community Supports Committee). Commissioners also discussed the need for additional staff in Adult Protective Services and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, to protect some of the County’s most vulnerable adults. The County is required by federal law to provide these services, but the funding received is inadequate and must be supplemented by the state and the County. Lastly, Commissioners noted findings and recommendations from the 2017 Summer Study on Affordable Rental Housing for Seniors and the need to preserve current and provide additional affordable housing. The issues identified at this event will help to inform the Commission’s policy advocacy as we move into 2018.



Commissioner Nanine Meiklejohn addressing the audience at the Legislative Breakfast



Commissioner Richard Jourdenais addressing the audience at the Legislative Breakfast

County Advocacy

The Commission recognizes and appreciates the efforts of the County Executive and the County Council to respond to the needs of the all older adults in the County, including those who are low-income and/or otherwise vulnerable, and those who are healthier and more vital.

The Commission was pleased to support the County Executive's FY18 Senior Initiative budget. After several years of cutbacks in services to seniors, the budget included increases for services for seniors across several departments. These included: staff positions for Adult Protective Services and the Guardianship Program, the final of three increases to Adult Foster Care rates, increased free Ride-On transportation hours, expanded hours for Senior Centers and an EMS social worker position.

In April 2017, small groups of Commission members met with County members to provide additional information about these items and articulate the position of the COA. The Commission engaged in other advocacy on behalf of the County senior, including:

- Support for the monitoring of the implementation of regulations for the use of funds generated from assessments on the UBER and Lyft, for the transportation needs of seniors with disabilities.
- Support for the continued monitoring of the development of a strategic plan to end food insecurity in the County to ensure that addresses the needs of seniors.

The COA also developed budget recommendations for FY 2019 that focus on protecting and supporting our most vulnerable seniors, and on preserving and expanding affordable senior housing options:

Protection and Support for Vulnerable Seniors

COA is advocating for the following:

- Public Guardianship Program—One Full Time Social Worker Position
- State's Attorney's Office—One Full Time Fraud Investigation Position
- Senior Center Plus/Early State Memory Loss Pilot Program
- Long Term Care Ombudsman Program—One Full Time Ombudsman Position
- Respite Care Services—Additional Funding to Support Minimum Wage Increase for Direct Care Staff
- Respite Care Services—Increased Funding for Respite House

Preserve and Expand Affordable Housing Options

The demand for affordable housing is increasing as our older adult population is growing. While the COA did not request specific funding for affordable housing in the FY18 budget, we continued to prioritize the need for more affordable housing options for seniors, protections for renters, and programs and services to address senior homelessness. Our 2017 Summer Study, "Preserving and Expanding Affordable Rental Housing in Montgomery

County and its Impact on Seniors,” includes several recommendations for policy, operations, and education/advocacy action.

COA urged the County Council to ensure that long-range planning, including innovative solutions for affordable housing, is undertaken for both older adult owned housing and rental housing to ensure a range of safe, affordable housing alternatives.

Information, Outreach, and Partnerships

The Commission continues to collaborate with other Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Stakeholder groups. Several such entities send liaisons to Commission meetings, and some Commission members serve as liaisons to other Boards, Committees and Commissions. The Commission looks for opportunities to collaborate with other groups on common issues. In addition, most Commission members are active in groups supporting senior services.

COA speakers in 2017

During the course of the year Commission members reached out to and heard from Isiah Leggett, County Executive and Gabriel Albornoz, Director, Recreation Department. COA also heard from the following county staff community partners: Lylie Fisher, Caregiver Support Coordinator; Leslie Marks, Senior Fellow, DHCA; Doris Gantos, Senior Vice-President, Bozzuto Management; Robert Goldman, CEO, Montgomery Housing Partnerships; Alan Goldstein, AHC Inc; and, Amy Gotwals, National Association of Area Agency on Aging (n4a).

At COA’s annual meeting, as part of the Commission’s priority setting process, Commission members heard from the HHS leaders and program managers about their initiatives and issues of concern. This information was used to inform the development of COA priorities for 2018.

Age Friendly Montgomery County

Age-Friendly Montgomery County is part of the international program of Age-Friendly communities sponsored by the World Health Organization. The Commission was the primary advocate for Montgomery County becoming an Age-Friendly county as a result of COA’s 2014 and 2015 Summer Studies and recommendations. COA continues to be actively involved in the Age-Friendly Montgomery County initiative. The Commission will continue to participate and to monitor and advise the County as it proceeds to implement the Age Friendly strategic plan.

Dementia Friendly America Initiative

In 2016, Montgomery County joined Dementia Friendly America, an emerging network of cities and states creating an informed, safe and respectful community for people and families impacted by dementia and other cognitive challenges. The County’s strengthened services include a new program of collaboration among public safety officers to offer additional support to individuals experiencing cognitive challenges and their families. The Commission continues to collaborate with this initiative.

2017 CoA Stakeholder Forum

The Commission convened a Stakeholder Forum in 2017: "Age Friendly Initiative, What's in it for You". Goals for the forum included educating attendees about the initiative and its structure (Advisory Group, Domain Workgroups, etc.) and the goals for each, progress made toward those goals, and learning from forum attendees about their thoughts, insights, ideas or challenges. Co-chairs of the Age-Friendly Domain Workgroups on housing, transportation, communication and home and community based services presented their goals, progress made and work still to be accomplished. Workgroup leaders then led three breakout sessions each to hear from attendees about remaining needs or challenges.

Participants identified many opportunities to enhance their experiences in the County. For example, County seniors and other residents suggested development of a long-term plan for affordable housing for older adults, enhanced communications regarding transportation options including groups who provide volunteer drivers, and enhanced and multiple ways for older adults and their families/caregivers to access information about services and programs in the county. Resident ideas and feedback were shared with Age-Friendly Domain Workgroups, HHS, and the County Council for review and action as appropriate. Results from the event survey rated the event successful.

Commission on Aging Standing Committees

A significant proportion of Commission work is accomplished through its Standing Committees. Those committees include Aging in Place/Community and Planning (AIP/C&P), Communications and Community Outreach (CCO), Health, Planning, Services, and Community Supports (HPSCS), and Public Policy (PP). During summer 2016, members of the Executive Committee worked to better align current COA Committees and their respective scopes with the Senior Agenda and those of the WHO/Age Friendly Montgomery County initiative. As a result, there were some modifications to the titles and scope of the Standing Committees. These changes were implemented early in 2017.

Aging in Place/Community and Planning

The **AIP/C&P Committee** continued to work with other COA committees to identify issues and priorities related to the ability of older adults to age in place, including accessibility, property tax incentives, and transportation. The focus was on housing affordability, including the goals articulated in the strategic plan of the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Housing Working Group. Those goals include: affordable housing (including home sharing), promote aging in place with wrap-around services, and affordable assisted living. The Committee also met with private rental property owners to follow up on their conversations about affordable housing with Mr. Leggett.

To ensure that Montgomery County's older adults have affordable housing options available to them, and to incorporate the goals of the Age-Friendly workgroup on housing, the AIP/C&P Committee further examined the current state of affordable, supportive housing in Montgomery County (both ownership and rental) during the *2017 Summer Study on Affordable Housing for Seniors*. In preparation, AIP/C&P met and heard from several experts on Affordable Housing.

In a February 2017 meeting, AIP/C&P heard from the Director of Montgomery County's Department of Housing and Community Services who underscored the challenges the County faces in attracting developers to build affordable housing for seniors, the growing need for affordable housing, and the number of older residents who are house burdened (30% of those age 65 and older), or more specifically, rent burdened (61% of those age 65 and older).

The Committee also planned and implemented a roundtable of representatives from for-profit and non-profit developer/landlord groups for the Commission in early April to further study the issue of building and sustaining affordable housing for seniors in Montgomery County; heard from representatives from two local senior housing communities (Friends House and Homecrest House) who discussed their model for developing affordable assisted living; and they reviewed the 2015 COA Summer Study on Age-Friendly Communities as well as Best Practices from the AARP Age-Friendly website to gain additional knowledge on developing sustainable affordable, supportive housing for older adults in Montgomery County.

AIP/C&P members also participated in Age-Friendly Montgomery County workgroups and in the development and implementation of the Age-Friendly strategic plan.

Communications and Community Outreach (CCO)

Seniors Today Task Force

The Commission co-produces the Montgomery County Cable show, *Seniors Today*, which continues to present relevant and entertaining programming. This year, guests included Secretary of Aging, Rona Kramer; Director of Health and Human Services, Uma Ahluwalia; Director of Recreation, Gabriel Albornoz; Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Director, Eileen Bennett; County Council President, Roger Berliner; and many others.

Topics included financial exploitation, the Senior Summit, Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly initiatives, SNAP nutrition program, transportation services, Maryland Senior Olympics, and Heritage Montgomery. *Seniors Today* airs several times a month and is on-line at <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/ccm/seniorstoday.html>. The program is hosted by Austin Heyman, Senior Fellow, Office of Community Partnerships.

Health Planning, Services and Community Supports (HPSCS)

The HPSCS Committee worked with the Maryland Dental Action Coalition to support SB169/HB1158, which provides for a study of the impact of dental emergencies on emergency room costs and provides authorization for the Governor to establish an adult dental benefit. HPSCS provided talking points for testimony and letters of support for the bills that successfully passed in the FY18 legislative cycle.

HPSCS also supported a small planning grant from the Health Care Initiative Foundation for the Montgomery County End of Life Care coalition. The grant, run through Hospice Caring Inc., will help strengthen the Coalition, engage stakeholders and help educate Montgomery County residents about palliative and end of life care.

HPSCS members participated in educating County Council members about COA 2018 priorities and were active in the development of the Dementia Friendly America Initiative and the Age-Friendly Montgomery County workgroups.

Public Policy (PP)

The PP Committee took the lead of the Commission's advocacy on priority issues at the county, state and federal levels, as discussed in detail under COA activities, above. The Committee reviewed proposed legislation on the state, county, and federal levels; researched relevant topics as needed; drafted testimony and other written documents; testified before the County Council and State legislative committees; and convened the 2017 legislative breakfast in preparation for the 2018 legislative session in Annapolis. Specific details are noted above. ■

2017 Summer Study: Preserving and Expanding Affordable Rental Housing in Montgomery County and its Impact on Seniors

Montgomery County's elected officials and department directors acknowledge the ever-growing shortage in affordable rental housing in the county. This shortage across the country is a challenge that has been acknowledged nationally. The shortage has a critical negative impact on older residents of Montgomery County who are finding it increasingly difficult to age-in-place in their homes and communities. During the summer of 2017, COA studied the shortage and potential solutions with the following goals in mind:

- Learn more about the shortage; its causes and potential solutions
- Invite a diverse group of affordable housing experts and representatives of neighborhood associations, the Renters Alliance and Action in Montgomery (AIM) to assist the COA in determining specific barriers it can have an impact on and discuss strategies to overcome these barriers
- Seek information on innovative ways to expand affordable rental housing for older adults in Montgomery County
- Develop recommendations that the COA can support and advise the County about options for consideration

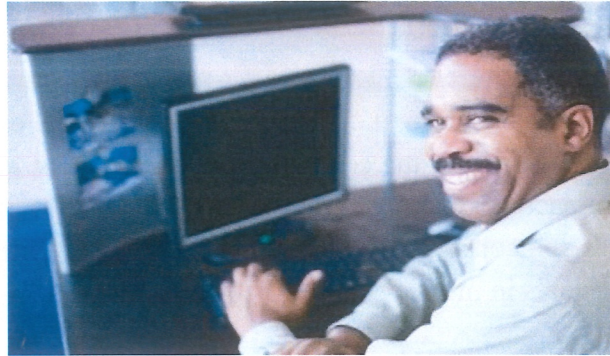
Recommendations to preserve and expand affordable rental housing in Montgomery County fell into one of three categories; policy, operations, and education/advocacy. Details can be found in the Summer Study Report at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAAnnualReports.html>.

COA Plans for 2018

The Commission on Aging will engage in the following activities in 2018:

- COA and its Committees will meet regularly to implement Commission goals
- Convene the 2018 Stakeholder Forum on March 28th
- Meet with County Council members on COA budget priorities in April 2018
- Convene annual meeting in May/June 2018
- Advocate on priority issues, including budget issues, at the County, State and Federal levels
- The summer months are usually devoted to a COA Summer Study(ies) where there is an in-depth exploration of a topic of interest. COA is exploring using the summer months for different opportunities for exploration/development, e.g. summer study(ies) or other activities, TBD.
- Host Legislative Breakfast in November 2018
- Participate in Age-Friendly Montgomery County workgroups and monitor implementation of the Age Friendly strategic plan as appropriate. The Commission Chair is a member of the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Advisory Group
- Collaborate with other Boards, Committees, Commissioners and other groups as appropriate
- Other activities as identified

LOOKING FOR SERVICES FOR SENIORS?



Visit **Montgomery Senior Site** for information on

- Caregiving
- Consumer Issues
- Employment
- Health
- Recreation and Libraries
- Safety
- Senior Housing
- Taxes and Finances
- Transportation

Montgomery Senior Site is designed to provide information on county services in one easy to find place at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior or call **240-777-3000** or dial 311.

Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Uma S. Ahluwalia, Director

Dr. John J. Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services

Dr. Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging

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MARCH 2018

