



## COMMISSION ON AGING

### Montgomery County Commission on Aging FY'17 Budget Statement

April 6, 2016

Good Evening my name is Noelle Heyman, Chair of the Commission on Aging.

The Commission on Aging greatly appreciates the support the County Executive continues to provide to seniors as reflected in the FY'17 Senior Initiative Budget. We also wish to acknowledge the County Executive's Summit on Aging, held in December 2015, which called attention to the County's accomplishments in providing needed services and programs for older adults in addition to identifying *Community for a Lifetime* priorities for the future.

The Commission is pleased to support the County Executive's FY'17 Senior Initiative budget enhancements including: increase in funds for Medical Daycare subsidies for additional clients to attend Adult Day Care program; additional funds for mandated Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) evaluations; new funds for a Senior Fellow position to support the County's Age-Friendly Communities initiative. It also includes additional funds for operating and staffing a full senior program at the new North Potomac Community Center; additional funds to support Victory Crossing, a mixed-income senior development in Silver Spring; enhancing the Call-n-Ride program by decreasing the minimum age for eligibility from age 67 to 65; additional funds to provide low-income immigrant seniors with in-center and educational field trip activities, and an increase in meals on wheels.

As much as the Commission applauds these budget increases and enhancements, many of which were requested in the Commission's FY'17 budget priorities statement and/or in Commission letters, there are Commission priorities that are not reflected in an increase in funds in the County Executive's FY'17 budget and which we believe would provide additional protection and support for our County's older and most vulnerable residents. These Commission budget priorities include:

- **Montgomery County Respite Services Program** – Increase in funds to provide additional respite services for individuals who are caring for older adults in Montgomery County. As the County's senior population increases by approximately 5,000 older adults each year, the number of family caregivers also increases. The toll on many of these caregivers can result in detrimental effects on the individual caregiver, local businesses, society, and the ones they are caring for in terms of lost income, absenteeism, reduced productivity, mental and physical health challenges. Even though many families take great joy in providing care to their loved ones at home these consequences can be overwhelming. Caregivers need physical breaks to tend to their own needs. They also need emotional breaks so they can return to their caregiving duties rested and refreshed. Respite care has been shown to help sustain

**Department of Health and Human Services**

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs)

family caregiver health and well-being, avoid or delay out-of-home placements, improve long term family stability, and reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect. FY17 Recommendation: \$100,000.

- **Adult Foster Care Program** - The Commission has sought incremental increases in the payment rates for Small Group Homes in the Adult Foster Care program. The last increase in FY15 was a beginning attempt to increase the Adult Foster Care reimbursement rate in order to reduce the gap between the County and State subsidy rates for small assisted living group homes. The care providers remain hopeful that the reimbursement would continue to take into account the fact that subsidy rates remained flat for more than 20 years prior to the last increase. Additional increases are necessary in order to begin to address the financial challenges of housing, care and supervision for our most vulnerable residents. FY17 Recommendation: \$153,180.
- **Case Management- Social Services to Adults Program** - The Commission recognizes that as of December 2015 there were 205 adult residents on the Social Services to Adults Program waiting list to receive case management support. Hence, there is an imminent need to increase case management services to senior residents. The Social Services to Adults Program through timely short-term case management strives to reduce inappropriate and costly institutionalization and enables maximum client self-sufficiency in the community. SSTA case management focuses on mitigating factors that may lead to abuse, neglect, self-neglect and/or exploitation. FY17 Recommendation: \$80,000 for one full-time social worker position.

The Commission also wishes to provide our views on a few other budget-related items.

**Age-Friendly Community Certification** – The Commission enthusiastically welcomed the County Executive’s acceptance of the World Health/AARP’s invitation to become an Age-Friendly Community. We are gratified that WHO/AARP recognized Montgomery County’s many age-friendly accomplishments over the last eight plus years by approving the County’s Age-Friendly Community initiative to begin with the Implementation Phase of the WHO/AARP Age-Friendly Communities program.

To support this County-wide initiative and based on what we learned, the Commission recommended that a permanent full-time high-level manager position be created to lead this Montgomery County program. Although, the Commission recognizes that there are budget constraints for creating such a position at this time, and is pleased that funds for a Senior Fellow position is in the County Executive’s FY’17 budget, we continue to support the creation of a full-time manager position in the future.

**Caregiver Support Coordinator** - The Commission thanks the County Executive for having funded a part-time Caregiver Support Coordinator position in last year’s budget to coordinate outreach to seniors and persons with disabilities and supports the continued funding for this position in the County Executive’s FY’17 budget. However, the Commission is concerned about the growing population of seniors and persons with disabilities and the associated growing need for caregiving support and outreach. The Commission will monitor whether a part-time Caregiving Support Coordinator position can provide the needed support or if a full-time Caregiving Support Coordinator is required to adequately meet the needs of County caregivers for older adults.

**Property Tax Increase** - The Commission recognizes the need for additional services and supports the increase in property tax rates proposed by the Executive with one caveat. We propose an exception be made for seniors who are house rich and income poor. We urge that people over 65 years of age be exempt from the tax increase if their income is less than three times the federal poverty rate, or \$35,640 for a single person or \$48,060 for a couple.

For FY'17, the Commission continues to focus on key policy and budget measures to help attain the vision of a Community for a Lifetime. We continue support for and monitor implementation of the Senior Agenda and the recommendations of our Summer Studies and Stakeholder Forums.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this forum.