

# Commission on Aging Montgomery County, Maryland 2019 Annual Report



Department of Health and Human Services  
May 2020

## Montgomery County Commission on Aging 2019 Annual Report

### Enabling Legislation

The Commission on Aging was established by Montgomery County in 1974 pursuant to a requirement of the Federal *Older Americans Act of 1965*, that there be an Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging. (42 U.S.A.C. Sec. 3001 et. seq.; MC Code Article III, Sec. 27-34.) In creating the Commission, the Council declared:

*It is hereby declared to be the public policy of the County to promote and initiate programs to improve conditions of the aging or elderly in the County; to work toward elimination of restrictions which impede older citizens from full participation in the mainstream of community life; and to assist and stimulate all levels of government and the community to be more responsive to the needs of the County's older citizens.*

Among the powers granted to the Commission are the following:

- (a) To study and investigate by means of public or private meetings, conferences and public hearings, conditions which may result in unmet needs or in discrimination or prejudice because of age.*
- (b) 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.*
- (c) To work to remove the unmet needs or discrimination or prejudice on the basis of age in such areas as housing, recreation, employment, education, community services and related matters. (MC Code Article III, Sec. 27-34.)*

### Commission Membership

The County Code requires that the Commission include at least 18 members appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. Members must be County residents, and a majority must be age 60 and older. Members are to 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.

### Collaborations and Partnerships

The Commission collaborates 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 other organizations supporting senior services.

**Front cover, top row l to r:** Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive; Dr. Jean Dinwiddie, Chair, Montgomery County CoA; and Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services. **Bottom row l to r:** CoA members Dr. Arunima Ghosh; Dr. Revathi Vikram; Hillery Tsumba; and Arthur Williams.

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### *Letter from the Chair*



**The Honorable Marc Elrich**  
**The Honorable Sidney Katz**

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging is pleased to provide its Annual Report for 2019. The Report describes the key activities of the Commission as an advisor to County officials and as the Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging as mandated by the *Older Americans Act*. The Commission also serves as an effective advocate for the interests and concerns of the County's older adults and their families.

In 2019, the Commission continued to monitor the County's progress in achieving the goals and vision of the "Senior Agenda: A Community for a Lifetime." We were honored to have County Executive Elrich and Council members Gabe Albornoz and Evan Glass speak at Commission meetings. We were pleased that some of the Commission's budget priorities were included in the FY20 County Operating Budget. We thank the County Executive and County Council for your initiatives and support of older adults.

The Commission's significant activities in 2019 included:

- Held its annual Public Forum. The theme of the 2019 event was "Older Adults in the County's Diverse Racial, Ethnic, and LGBTQ Communities" and it took place at the Silver Spring Civic Building. More than 100 people attended and discussed the challenges that older adults in diverse communities face.
- Hosted a Legislative Breakfast for members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly.
- Met individually with the County Executive and members of the County Council to advocate for older adult programming and resources.
- Testified twice before the County Council in support of the CoA's budget priorities on issues affecting older adults.
- Successfully lobbied for resources in the County budget for Respite Care, the Housing Initiative Fund, the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program, and the Home Sharing Program.
- Met with Directors of multiple County Departments to discuss CoA priorities and how to successfully partner to achieve results.

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The Commission acknowledges the revenue challenges affecting the County budget. While budget recommendations in 2019 focused on continuing to improve and enhance current programs and new efforts, we remain sensitive to economic issues affecting the County.

The Commission's Aging in Community and Health and Wellness Committees explored topics with invited experts to gain additional knowledge to identify what areas should be further investigated and/or recommended for Commission action and advocacy. The Public Policy Committee monitored relevant County and State bills and sent letters of support as appropriate.

We could not have accomplished all that without the support of County staff. In this regard, we express our deep appreciation to Department of Health and Human Services Director, Raymond Crowel. In addition, it is with great respect and admiration that we acknowledge the wise counsel and outstanding support and guidance of Dr. Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging (AAA).

The following AAA staff also provide outstanding assistance to the Commission:

Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator; Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator; Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Manager; Lylie Fisher, Caregiver Coordinator; Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator; and Erin Smith, Program Data Manager. Their contributions are invaluable to the Commission and to the well-being of all older adults in the County.

The Commission looks forward to engaging with you on matters that significantly affect the quality of life of the County's older adult residents and their families.

Respectfully,

Jean Dinwiddie  
Chair



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**2019 Commission Officers**

Jean Dinwiddie, Chair  
Stephanie Edelstein, Vice Chair  
Beverly Rollins, Secretary  
Revathi Vikram, Budget and Finance Advisor

**2019 Committee and Task Force Chairs**

Aging in Community: Nanine Meiklejohn and Monica Schaeffer  
Communications and Community Outreach: Amy Harbison and Hillery Tumba  
Health and Wellness: Neal Brown and Marsha Weber  
Public Policy: Mort Faller and Ryan Wilson

**2019 Commission Members**

Amoke Alakoye, Neal Brown, Barbara Brubeck, Jean Dinwiddie, Stephanie Edelstein, Morton Faller, Arunima Ghosh, Amy K. Harbison, Richard Jourdenais, Alan Kaplan, Miriam Kelty, Morris Klein, Karen Maricheau, Nanine Meiklejohn, Ruby Moone, Karon Phillips, Phyllis Rand, Edgar Rivas, Beverly Rollins, Deborah Royster, Monica H. Schaeffer, Barbara Selter, Odessa Shannon, Mary Sweeney, Tho Tran, Hillery Tumba, Revathi Vikram, Marsha Weber, T. Ryan Wilson, Arthur Williams, Syed Yusuf, Janice Zalen

**Staff**

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



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### **2019 Commission on Aging Accomplishments**

- Held a Public Forum on older adults in the County's diverse racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ communities.
- Hosted a Legislative Breakfast for members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly.
- Successfully lobbied for resources in the County budget for Respite Care, the Housing Initiative Fund, the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program, and the Home Sharing Program.
- Met individually with the County Executive and members of the County Council to advocate for older adult programming and resources.
- Testified twice before the County Council in support of the CoA's budget priorities on issues affecting older adults.
- Met with Directors of multiple County Departments to discuss CoA priorities and how to successfully partner to achieve results.
- Sent several letters to State and local legislators in support of laws, programs, and services affecting older adults.

### **Commission on Aging Budget Priorities**

The CoA develops annual budget priorities that take into consideration the mission as set forth in the enabling legislation as well as information and data from County agencies, elected officials, and outside experts.

#### **Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Priorities**

- Senior Center Plus/Early Stage Memory Loss Pilot Program: funding for this new Program.
- Respite Care: funding to support minimum wage increase for direct care staff.
- Department of Recreation: funding for Friday transportation to senior centers and mini trips.
- Public Guardianship Program: add one full-time Social Worker position.
- Liaison: funding for a new "Coordinator for Outreach and Support to Older Adults in Diverse Communities" position.
- Affordable Housing: measures including funding of the Housing Initiative Fund, expansion of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program, and implementation of a Home Sharing Pilot Program to ensure that long-range planning is undertaken for both older adult-owned housing and rental housing.

#### **Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Priorities**

- *HHS*: (1) Expand home delivered Senior Nutrition Program to include weekends; (2) add two social worker positions: one in Adult Protective Services and one in the Public Guardianship Program; and (3) increase the subsidy for small group homes and Adult Foster Care.
- *Recreation*: (1) Restore FY20 cuts affecting programs serving older adults; and (2) increase hours of service for senior programs.
- *Housing*: Continue to increase the Housing Initiative Fund to further expand affordable housing options for older adults.

## **Area Agency on Aging**

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is responsible for the provision of continuum of home and community-based services and provides staff support to the Commission on Aging. 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* 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 *Older Americans Act* to improve the quality of life for older persons by a network that maintains a holistic view of aging. The AAAs are mandated to "foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems to serve older individuals..."

### **Highlights of AAA Activities in Fiscal Year 2019**

- Staff from the Aging and Disability Services' Maryland Access Point answered 19,259 calls to assist seniors, persons with disabilities, and their families to provide access to information and needed short- and long-term care services offered both by the County and our non-profit partners.
- The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program conducted more than 3,185 visits to long-term care facilities, provided 1,537 information consultations with individuals, 558 consultations with providers, investigated 339 formal complaints, and opened 236 cases. The Program has a dedicated volunteer corps of 50 State-certified individuals serving 276 facilities.
- The Public Guardianship Program served 86 persons in need of protective services (as determined by the courts), conducting more than 908 face-to-face contacts with these clients. Additionally, the Program conducted 13 education and training events for more than 250 participants. The Public Guardianship Program helped residents avoid 29 cases due to preventative assessments and education.
- The Senior Nutrition Program served 5,390 clients and provided more than 409,548 meals, both in congregate sites and through home-delivered meals.
- The AAA, via contracts with Mobile Dentist, provided dental care and dentures to 179 seniors who lacked insurance.
- The Nurses team conducted 3,287 Adult Evaluation and Review Services evaluations, which are mandated to enable eligible persons to receive community-based, long-term

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Medicaid-funded services. The AAA currently provides nurse monitoring services (via its contract partners) to over 2,600 Community First Choice Program participants. The AAA Supports Planning Agency serves 320 Community First Choice clients.

- The Health and Wellness Program served 600 individuals through health screening sessions and 1,300 individuals through health education sessions which include the County's new Medication Management Program, Homemed. The Health and Wellness Program also organized physical fitness and exercise sessions through classes such as "Bone Builders," "Matter of Balance," and our new "Stepping On" Program. Over 2,000 County residents were served.
- 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 Village Coordinator has helped to start or expand 30 villages since 2014.
- The Caregiver Support 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 numerous other partners.
- The Senior Fellow for Age-Friendly Montgomery facilitated the submission of the Montgomery County Three-Year Strategic Plan (for fiscal years 2017, 2018, and 2019) to the World Health Organization/AARP Age-Friendly Communities Initiative.



## **Commission on Aging Background**

### **Older Adults in Montgomery County**

The Commission's work is ever more significant as our older adult population continues to grow and to become more diverse. Seniors are the fastest growing age group in the County. Between 2015 and 2040, the Montgomery County older adult population (age 60+) is projected to increase by 53 percent, from 205,841 to 315,666. Life expectancy is also increasing, with the population of older adults age 85+ expected to increase by approximately 39 percent between 2015 and 2030.

The older adult population of Montgomery County is also growing more diverse. Approximately 14 percent of residents age 60 and older are Asian; 13 percent are Black or African American; and 8 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 38 percent of County residents age 60+, the majority of whom are women, live alone.

The County is also home to significant numbers of low- and moderate-income older adults: 18 percent of households that are headed by an individual age 65+ have income less than \$20,000 per year. Housing costs are an issue, particularly for renters. For 25 percent of senior homeowners, housing costs exceed 30 percent of their income; 51 percent of senior renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Looking at the income that older adults need to live independently in Montgomery County the monthly figure for a renter is \$36,288 annually (131 percent of the National average), \$46,512 annually for an individual with a mortgage (136 percent of the National average), and \$29,160 annually for an individual without a mortgage (125 percent of the National average).

In 2015, 23 percent 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.

### **CoA Organization and Core Activities**

Commission activities include monthly meetings of the full Commission, the Executive Committee, and each of the three standing Committees: Aging in Community, Health and Wellness, and Public Policy. The CoA also maintains a Communications and Community Outreach Task Force that is engaged for special projects. Committees explore topics and issues within their scope and identify challenges and gaps in services and supports. These issues may include such things as budget requests for programs for older adults or advocating at the County- or State-level for laws, services or programs. The Committees often present their research to the full Commission for consideration for further action.

The CoA also engages in concentrated studies of other age-relevant issues, which in recent years have included affordable housing, quality of care in nursing homes, and the need for financial assistance to help cover the high cost of assisted living. Focus or Task Groups are created as needed to examine discrete issues such as ageism, employment

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discrimination, and caregiving. The CoA also co-produces the monthly “County Cable Montgomery” program, *Seniors Today*, which informs the community about issues, programs, and activities for older adults. This year, Commission member Amy Harbison stepped in as host of this program which is broadcast several times each month and available for on-line viewing.

All CoA meetings are open to the public. In addition, to help inform the Commission’s priorities and advocacy, full Commission and Committee meetings frequently include invited guests who share their expertise on important topics. Meetings are also attended by representatives from other Montgomery County Commissions, Boards, Committees, Departments, Agencies, and interested stakeholders. Several Commissioners serve as liaisons to other relevant organizations and groups.



**Panelists at the CoA’s July 2019 meeting (l to r):**

Dr. Raymond Crowell, Director, Department of Montgomery County Health and Human Services; Linda McMillian, Senior Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council; Beth Shuman, Senior Legislative Aide, Montgomery County Council; Gabriel Albornoz, Member, Montgomery County Council; Richard Madaleno, Director, Montgomery County of Office of Management and Budget; and Joshua Walters, Senior Analyst, Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget.

Commissioners are in frequent contact with the County Executive, County Council members, Department Directors and staff, State and Federal legislators, members of the public, and others to advance programs, services, and policies on behalf of County seniors. At the County-level, the CoA provides oral and written testimony on legislative, budget, and program issues and priorities pending before the County Council. In addition, CoA members meet with members of the Council and Executive branch Directors; have ongoing communication with Department staff; and collaborate with other County Boards, Committees,

Commissions, and stakeholders on issues of mutual interest. CoA members also engage with non-profit partners, private sector groups, and other stakeholders to identify challenges and develop solutions.

At the State level, the CoA responds to proposed legislation in the General Assembly and communicates with relevant State agencies and members of the Montgomery County Delegation on issues of concern to older adults in the County. Members also testify at County and State hearings.

At the Federal level, the CoA writes letters on priority issues to appropriate Congressional representatives. Members also support Congressional and Executive Branch outreach conducted by National organizations that represent the older adult population on issues affecting Montgomery County residents.

The CoA convenes two significant annual events:

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A **Public Forum** for older adults in the community to learn about issues that may affect them, and for the CoA to hear from older residents, caregivers, and service providers about their issues of concern.

A **Legislative Breakfast** where members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly are invited to meet with CoA members and have the opportunity to learn of the CoA's work and priorities. It is also a chance for the CoA to learn about the legislators' plans for the upcoming legislative session and for all participants to identify areas for working together to benefit the older adults in the County. These events enhance CoA members' knowledge of the issues and concerns of older adults in Montgomery County and help to inform the development of CoA advocacy priorities.

### **Key CoA Advocacy Activities in Recent Years**

The CoA believes that Montgomery County continues to make progress toward becoming a Community for a Lifetime as envisioned by the Senior Agenda, a document that was developed by the CoA and endorsed by the County Executive and the County Council in 2012. In keeping with the vision and goals of the Senior Agenda, the CoA continues to focus on quality of life for all older adults in the County.

**County Level.** CoA budget advocacy has resulted in additional funding for essential County supports and services for vulnerable older adults, including services that are mandated under Federal and State law but that require supplemental County funding to meet the need. These programs and services include the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Adult Protective Services, Public Guardianship, Adult Foster Care, Respite Care, senior centers, and a number of transportation programs.

**State Level.** The CoA has supported a number of successful State legislative initiatives in recent years, including: mandating banks, credit unions and, most recently, financial advisors to report suspected elder abuse; requiring hospitals to provide a patient (or his or her legal guardian) with the opportunity to name a caregiver to receive notice of the patient's discharge and provide information about the patient's aftercare needs; reducing property tax burdens on older homeowners; eliminating filing fees on certain estates where the only asset is real property and the person seeking appointment as an administrator is low-income and is the sole heir to that property; allowing the Maryland Attorney General to file a civil action for damages on behalf of elder financial abuse victims; establishing a telephone reassurance program for older adults; and examining the quality of care in nursing homes.

In 2016, the CoA worked with the Maryland Dental Action Coalition to support the *Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults Act* (SB169/HB1158), that provided for a study of the impact of dental emergencies on emergency room costs. It also authorized the Governor to establish an adult dental benefit in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program. The Health and Wellness Committee provided talking points for testimony and letters of support for the successful bills. A pilot program to offer such a benefit commenced in 2019.

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### **Advocacy for Innovative**

**Programming.** In recent years, the CoA has successfully advocated for the creation of several innovative County programs and services for older adults and new positions to support them, including a Transportation and Mobility Manager, a Village Coordinator, a Caregiver Support Coordinator, and a Senior Fellow to manage the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Initiative. Other pioneering programs that Montgomery County recently instituted

with CoA support include the Senior Center Plus Program for older adults with cognitive impairments, and a partnership between Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services and the Department of Health and Human Services to provide home health and other services to frequent callers to 911. In FY20, the CoA advocated successfully for reinstatement of the “Senior Budget” in the County Executive’s budget.



**Discussion at the CoA’s November 2019 meeting (l to r):** Dr. Elise Barnes, Rona Kramer, Secretary, Maryland Department of Aging; Evan Glass, Member, Montgomery County Council; Dr. Jean Dinwiddie, Chair, Montgomery County CoA; and Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services.

**Advocacy for an Age-Friendly Montgomery County.** As a result of the Commission on Aging’s research and advocacy, in 2015, under the leadership of County Executive Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County enrolled in the World Health Organization/AARP global network of certified Age-Friendly Communities. The County now enjoys the status of a designated Age-Friendly Community, in an initiative known as Age-Friendly Montgomery County. Project leaders created 10 areas of focus, or domains, essential to our Age-Friendly community: Civic and Social Involvement; Communications; Elder Abuse Prevention; Employment; Health and Wellness; Home- and Community-Based Services; Housing; Planning; Open Spaces, Parks, and Community Buildings; Senior Public Safety; and Transportation and Mobility. The County Executive established an Age-Friendly Montgomery County Advisory Group that is comprised of Department Directors and community leaders who oversee the efforts of the work groups for the 10 domains. Together, these public and private-sector partners plan for and guide work to address issues, meet challenges, and build on opportunities for each of the domains. The CoA actively supports and works in collaboration with the Age-Friendly Montgomery County effort. The CoA Chair serves on the Advisory Group, and CoA members serve on the domain work groups. Additional information about the Age-Friendly initiative is available at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/age-friendly.html>.

### **Commission on Aging Briefing Book for Elected Officials and other Stakeholders**

In the Fall of 2018, the CoA developed a “Commission on Aging Briefing Book” to help acquaint the newly elected County Executive and County Council members with the Commission’s important work. The Book provided information on nine key issues facing older adults in Montgomery County including: affordable housing; assisted living affordability; caregiver support; elder abuse, neglect and exploitation; health and social services; quality of care in long-term care facilities; social isolation; and transportation

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(including driver and pedestrian safety). It also addressed the cross-cutting topics of diversity, communications, and ageism.

The Briefing Book was distributed to the new County Executive and to County Council members, as well as to County government Department Directors, the County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly, and to other stakeholders. It is available on the CoA website at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAindex.html>.

### **2019 Commission on Aging Advocacy**

The Commission's 2019 priorities and activities were informed by the goals and recommendations from the County's Senior Agenda, 2015 County Executive's Summit on Aging, the Age-Friendly Montgomery County strategic goals, and the recommendations of the 2018 Public Forum. The CoA also drew upon information gathered from a number of summer studies that it completed in recent years, from previous stakeholder meetings and public forums, and from input from speakers and Agency representatives.

#### **County**

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 otherwise vulnerable, and those who are healthier and more vital. Our advocacy includes written and oral testimony at County Council meetings and hearings, meetings with Department Directors and representatives, and meetings with individual Council members. The County Executive, Council members, and other officials are invited to CoA meetings, and the Commission welcomes any communications to discuss issues affecting older adults in the County.

The CoA's priorities for the FY20 County budget included recommendations for health and social services programs, affordable housing expansion and preservation, and new positions and programs that would provide needed support for the County's vulnerable and vital older adults and their families. The Commission's specific budget priorities were provided to the County Executive, the Office of Management and Budget, and the County Council and included:

- Senior Center Plus/Early Stage Memory Loss Pilot Program: funding for this new Program.
- Respite Care: funding to support minimum wage increase for direct care staff.
- Department of Recreation: funding for Friday transportation to senior centers and mini-trips.
- Public Guardianship Program: add one full-time Social Worker Position.
- Liaison: funding for a new "Coordinator for Outreach and Support to Older Adults in Diverse Communities" position.

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- **Affordable Housing:** measures including funding of the Housing Initiative Fund, expansion of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program, and implementation of a Home Sharing Pilot Program to ensure that long-range planning is undertaken for both older adult-owned housing and rental housing.

In April 2019, following release of the County Executive's proposed FY20 budget, Commission members met with County Council members to discuss that proposal and to advocate for additional CoA budget priorities. The FY20 budget approved by the Council included resources for Respite Care, the Housing Initiative Fund, the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program, and the Home Sharing Program. Those items that were not funded were taken into consideration in the Commission's priority deliberations for the FY21 budget.

To develop its FY21 budget priorities, the CoA convened a special meeting in July with representatives from the County Executive's and the County Council's offices, and subsequently met with a number of Department Officials to discuss their budget needs. In the fourth quarter of 2019, the Commission set its budget priorities for 2021, building on previous goals and recommendations.

Those priorities included:

- *HHS:* (1) Expand home delivered Senior Nutrition Programs to include weekends; (2) add two social worker positions: one in Adult Protective Services and one in the Public Guardianship Program; and (3) increase the subsidy for small group homes and Adult Foster Care.
- *Recreation:* (1) Restore FY20 cuts affecting programs serving older adults; and (2) increase hours of service for senior programs.
- *Housing:* Continue to increase the Housing Initiative Fund to further expand affordable housing options for older adults.

While the CoA may not be able to advocate for all issues, especially since it is often asked to identify its top two or three budget priorities, the list is important because it provides additional guidance for advocacy moving forward. Some budget items for which the CoA has advocated in the past received support even though they did not rise to the highest level of priority this year. These include Friday transportation to senior centers; restoring the Senior Fellow positions and adding one more position on diversity issues; and expanding funding for the Early Stage Memory Loss Program at senior centers. The CoA will continue to advocate for these items as appropriate. Some additional issues – e.g., hearing loss and social isolation, older adult employment, the Ride-On Flex Program – will be studied further by CoA Committees.

### **Other County Advocacy Activities**

During 2019, the CoA engaged in several other advocacy efforts on behalf of older adults in the County.

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### *Accessible Transportation*

Commission members worked closely with the Commission on People with Disabilities to support appropriate use by the County of the Transportation Services Initiative Fund (TSIF). This Fund, generated from assessments on UBER and Lyft rides, was created to improve the delivery of “accessible transportation services, transportation for eligible



Alumni CoA member and former *Seniors Today* host, Austin Heyman, with current CoA member and current *Seniors Today* host, Amy Harbison.

senior citizens, and transportation for persons of limited income.” The CoA testified before the County Council and participated in other meetings with TSIF stakeholders, Council members, and Agency representatives, to ensure that the Fund is used for the purpose for which it was intended.

In addition, the CoA sent a letter to Montgomery County’s Director of Transportation that outlined a number of recommendations to make the pilot Ride-On Flex Program more Age-Friendly.

### *Affordable Housing*

In addition to ongoing advocacy to increase the Housing Initiative Fund, and recognizing the potential for accessory dwelling units to help meet this need, the CoA wrote in support of the spirit of ZTA 19-10, which amended the Montgomery County Code to facilitate the use of such units.

The CoA also wrote to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary, Kenneth Holt, in support of Montgomery County’s letter recommending modifications to the administration of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program.

### *Additional Resources for Adult Protective Services*

The CoA sent an appeal to Governor Larry Hogan to request additional funding for social worker positions in Montgomery County’s Adult Protective Services and Public Guardianship Programs. In October, a letter was sent to County Council Chair, Nancy Navarro, backing her proposal for a Special Appropriation of \$203,484 to the County Government’s FY20 Operating Budget to provide senior adult programming at the Wheaton Community Recreation Center.

### *State Advocacy*

The Public Policy Committee reviewed dozens of bills filed in the Maryland General Assembly during the 2019 session with a focus on those that were of interest to Montgomery County seniors. The Committee researched relevant topics, including

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protection for vulnerable adults, nursing home resident rights, Medicaid waivers, and affordable housing, and led the drafting of position letters on several bills.

The following bills supported by the CoA in the 2019 Maryland General Assembly session were enacted into law:

SB 261 – *Fee Waiver Estate Administration*: Requires the Register of Wills to waive filing and other fees for low income heirs seeking to probate real property.

SB 654 – *Property Tax Credit Senior Homeowner*: Enables Counties to offer property tax credit to homeowners age 65 and older who have owned the home for less than 40 years.

SB 669 (HB 592) – *Extended Care Facilities Discharge and Transfer*: Provides additional rights and notices to a resident upon transfer within or discharge from a comprehensive care or extended care facility (nursing home).

SB 699 – *Maryland Medical Assistance HCBS Program Waiver – Prohibition on Denial*: Prohibits the Maryland Department of Health from denying eligible individuals home and community-based services waiver services.

The following bills, supported by the CoA, were unsuccessful:

SB 475 (HB 485) – *Office of the Attorney General Senior and Vulnerable Adult Asset Recovery Unit*: would have created and funded a unit within the Office of Attorney General to protect seniors and vulnerable adults from financial crimes by bringing civil actions for damages against perpetrators.

HB 628 (MC 22-19) – *Residential Leases – Just Cause Eviction*: would have authorized Montgomery County to enact a law prohibiting residential landlords from evicting a tenant for reasons other than those “just cause” reasons listed in the statute.

### **Federal Advocacy**

The CoA submitted comments to a draft Federal Directive that would impact older persons in the County – OMB Directive 14: *Consumer Inflation Measures Produced by Federal Statistical Agencies*. The Commission’s letter discussed the impact of these measures on the *Federal Poverty Guidelines*, and as a result, their impact on low-income older adult eligibility for critical benefit programs.

## **2019 Commission on Aging Activities**

### **Public Forum on Older Adults in the County’s Diverse Racial, Ethnic, and LGBTQ Communities**

On March 19, 2019 the CoA held a public forum at the Civic Building in Silver Spring to examine issues that individuals within the County’s increasingly diverse older adult communities face. The CoA’s main goals for hosting the event were to (1) learn from

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representatives of these communities about the major issues and challenges facing their older adults; (2) provide an opportunity for members of these communities to hear from County government representatives regarding the services that are available to them; (3) allow individuals to address their concerns to County and community representatives; and (4) invite participants to share helpful information and experiences with other participants. Approximately 120 individuals attended and 20 community organizations provided exhibit tables.

During the forum representatives from several of the County's diverse communities were asked to discuss significant challenges facing older adults in their communities and to describe actions that have been taken to address these needs. In addition, representatives from Montgomery County government were asked to discuss relevant government and non-government programs that could be of benefit to the different communities. The forum's format included a panel discussion featuring representatives from the different communities followed by two break-out sessions where attendees were able to hear more, and ask questions of, the community representatives as well as the representatives from Montgomery County government.

Forum participants agreed that older adults in Montgomery County's diverse communities share significant challenges in the course of their daily lives. These challenges include language inaccessibility; little or no access to transportation, services and opportunities; a lack of cultural sensitivity (i.e., an appreciation and acknowledgement of the individuals' existence); and a need for strong community leadership. Another group, the LGBTQ community, faces all of those challenges in addition to a number of others: they often remain single (and do not have partners to care for them); live alone; do not have children; are ostracized by family; fear mistreatment from health care providers; are more likely to face poverty and homelessness; and carry stigmas into later life. All of these challenges, either alone or in combination, contribute to the overarching and devastating challenge of social isolation.



**Discussion at the CoA's November 2019 meeting (l to r):** Isabelle Schoenfeld; Edgar Rivas; Barbara Selter; Mary Sweeney; Morris Klein; Miriam Kelty; Dr. Elise Barnes; Arthur Williams; Rona Kramer, Secretary, Maryland Department of Aging; Evan Glass, Member, Montgomery County Council, Dr. Jean Dinwiddie, Chair, Montgomery County CoA; Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services.

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Participants agreed that the CoA's March 19 forum was just the beginning of working toward a solution. Based on what was learned, the CoA recommends that the communities and the governmental agencies continue to work together and to keep the conversation going. It recommends that Montgomery County hire a Senior Fellow to work with the different communities – an advocate who will connect with the older adults in the diverse communities and assist them to not only work with the government agencies but also help them to help themselves. The CoA also recommends that the community organizations and the County agencies continue to follow up and follow through with the strides that have already been made.



**Panelists at the CoA's July 2019 meeting (l to r):** Dr. Raymond Crowell, Director, Department of Montgomery County Health and Human Services; Linda McMillian, Senior Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council; Beth Shuman, Senior Legislative Aide, Montgomery County Council; Gabriel Albornoz, Member, Montgomery County Council; Richard Madaleno, Director, Montgomery County of Office of Management and Budget; and Joshua Walters, Senior Analyst, Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget.

Community representatives who participated in the forum included:

Lakshmi Aiyappa, Executive Director, ASHA for Women  
Daehyeon Choi, Social Service Division Director, Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington  
Tara Davis-Rama, Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager, National Capital Area Chapter, Alzheimer's Association  
Dr. Anna Maria Izquierdo-Porrera, Executive Director, Care for Your Health, Inc.  
Dr. Haywood Robinson, Pastor, The People's Community Baptist Church  
Vivien Hseuh, Founder, Chinese American Senior Services Association  
Mona Negm, Founder and President, American Muslim Senior Society  
Hung Manh Bui, President, Vietnamese American Senior Association of Maryland

Montgomery County government representatives included:

Sonia Mora, Senior Manager, Latino Health Initiative and Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland, Department of Health and Human Services.  
Rachael Ruffin, Program Specialist, African American Health Program  
Karen Tan, Senior Wellness Coordinator, Asian American Health Initiative, Department of Health and Human Services  
Dolores Ustrell-Roig, Director, Holiday Park Senior Center  
Diane Vu, Director, Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships

### Featured Speakers at Full CoA Meetings in 2019

During 2019, the CoA heard from a number of presenters at its full Commission meetings including:

**January:** Stacy Spann, Executive Director, Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County  
Matthew Losak, Executive Director, Montgomery County Renters Alliance, Inc.

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- February:** Travis Gayles, M.D., County Health Officer and Chief of Public Health Services, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
- April:** John J. Kenney, Ph.D., Chief Operating Officer, Jewish Social Service Agency  
Sara Hufstader, Project Coordinator, Jewish Social Service Agency  
Susan Hall Donovan, Director of Population Health, Nexus Montgomery Regional Partnership
- May:** Marcia Pruzan, Senior Fellow, Age-Friendly Montgomery County
- June:** Howard Haft, M.D., Executive Director, Maryland Primary Care Program
- July:** Gabriel Albornoz, Member, Montgomery County Council  
Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
Richard Madaleno, Director, Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget  
Linda McMillian, Senior Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council  
Mary Giles, Legislative Aide, Montgomery County Council  
Beth Shuman, Senior Legislative Aide, Montgomery County Council  
Joshua Walters, Senior Analyst, Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget
- September:** Margaret Jurgensen, Director, Montgomery County Board of Elections  
Christine Rzeszut, Operations Manager, Montgomery County Board of Elections  
Eli Glazier, Multimodal Transportation Planner Coordinator, Montgomery County Planning Department
- October:** Marc Elrich, County Executive, Montgomery County
- November:** Evan Glass, Member, Montgomery County Council  
Rona Kramer, Secretary, Maryland Department of Aging

### **CoA Meetings with Department Directors and Other Officials**

In addition to meeting with officials at full CoA meetings, Commission members met individually or in small groups with other experts to inform them of the CoA's work and concerns, and to learn of their organization's priorities and goals. Among those who Commission members met with include:

- Berke Atilla, Director, Montgomery County Department of Human Resources
- David Barwell, Audiologist, Gaithersburg, MD
- Eileen Bennett, Program Manager, Montgomery County Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
- Elaine Bonner Tompkins, Senior Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight
- Anita Brady, Manager, Montgomery County Office of Training and Organizational Development
- Frank Demarais, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Lorraine Driscoll, Public Information Officer, Montgomery County Government

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- David Gamse, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Council for the Aging
- Lisa Govoni, Senior Planner for Research & Special Projects, Montgomery County Planning Department
- Barry Hudson, Director, Montgomery County Office of Public Information
- Fred Lees, Chief of Management Services, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Suzanne Ludlow, City Manager, City of Takoma Park, Maryland
- Leslie Marks, Program Manager, Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Aseem Nigam, Director, Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Seth Morgan, Chair, Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
- Robin Riley, Director, Montgomery County Department of Recreation
- Al Roshdieh, Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Chuck Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive, Montgomery County Government
- James Stowe, Director, Montgomery County Office of Human Rights
- Mary Sweeney, Grass Roots Organization for the Well-Being of Seniors (GROWS)
- Marie Taylor, President and CEO of Leadership Montgomery
- Tiffany Ward, Racial Equity Program Manager, Montgomery County Government
- State legislators who attended the Legislative Breakfast

The CoA members also met with each of the Montgomery County Council members and the County Executive to discuss the Commission's FY20 budget priorities and concerns.

### **Legislative Breakfast**

For many years, the Commission has hosted an annual Legislative Breakfast to meet with members of the County's Delegation to the State legislature. County staff are also invited. The Breakfast provides the Commission, Delegation members, and County staff the opportunity to share accomplishments of the past year and to identify issues and priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

At its November, 2019 Breakfast Commission members briefed the legislators on the Health and Wellness Committee's paper, "Too Rich to be Poor, Too Poor to be Rich: The Senior Gap;" Montgomery County's Age-Friendly efforts; and the resource challenges faced by the County's Adult Evaluation Review Services and Adult Protective Services Programs. State legislators who attended included:

- Senator Ben Kramer (District 19)
- Senator Will Smith (District 20)
- Delegate Kumar Barve (District 17)
- Delegate Al Carr (District 18)
- Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr (District 17)
- Delegate Kathleen Dumais (District 15)

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- Delegate Gabriel Acevero (District 39)
- Delegate Jim Gilchrist (District 17)
- Delegate Lily Qi (District 15)
- Delegate Vaughn Stewart (District 19)

Michael Lore, Chief of Staff for Senator Susan Lee (District 16), also attended.

### **CoA Testimony**

Chair Jean Dinwiddie testified before the Montgomery County Council on April 8 and October 10 regarding the CoA's FY21 budget priorities and goals.

### **Standing Committee Activities**

A substantial amount of Commission activity occurs in its standing Committees, which provide the opportunity for members and guests to focus in greater depth on specific issues, develop projects, and identify potential priorities. Those Committees include Aging in Community, Health and Wellness, and Public Policy. In addition, in 2019 the Communications and Community Outreach Task Force was formed to work on special projects.

### ***Aging in Community***

**Committee 2019 Priorities.** At its October 2018 meeting, the Committee identified the following priority issues for 2019:

- Social Isolation: Response to Crises
- Housing Code Enforcement in Affordable Housing
- Food Insecurity
- Extremely Low-Income Housing and Senior Homelessness
- Support for Seniors in Community Schools.

**Affordable Housing.** The Committee considered projects to study rent stabilization, alternative housing models, and intergenerational living. During the year, members met with Mary Sweeney of GROWS; Lisa Govoni of the Montgomery County Planning Department; Leslie Marks, a Program Manager in Montgomery County's Division of Housing; Suzanne Ludlow, the City Manager of Takoma Park; and Aseem Nigan, Director of Montgomery County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs, and his Deputy, Frank Demarais. Committee members drafted a letter to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary, Kenneth Holt, in support of modifications to the administration of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program. In addition, the Committee looked at the issue of substantial rent increases in units where older adults have lived for long periods of time, and one Committee member also joined a workgroup to consider how to make support services more affordable and available to residents in Moderately Priced Dwelling Units in continuing care communities.

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**Age Discrimination in the Workplace.** In 2019, Committee members considered a project that looked at age discrimination in hiring and in the workplace. They met with James Stowe, Director of the County's Office of Human Rights, to discuss how the CoA and his office can work together against age discrimination. Members also met with the Director of the Office of Human Resources, Berke Attila, who indicated he was interested and supportive of issues associated with the employment of the County's aging workforce. Committee members also heard from David Gamse, CEO of the Jewish Council for the Aging and Co-chair of the Age-Friendly Montgomery Employment Domain workgroup, and Anita Brady, Montgomery County's manager of Training and Organizational Development, who discussed efforts to build a multi-generational workforce in the County.

***Racial Equity and Social Justice Act.*** Committee members developed and raised questions at a public hearing held by the Montgomery County Council regarding the *Racial Equity and Social Justice Act*.

**Food Insecurity:** The Committee advocated for the County to add a Senior Nutrition position; members also learned that the Maryland State Department of Aging would provide funding to restore meals on Friday for seniors at County senior centers. In addition, Committee members met with representatives from Senior Leadership Montgomery to discuss CoA priorities and they also met with representatives of the County Congregate Meal Program to determine whether the CoA needs to advocate for more staff for the Program.

**Transportation:** Committee members discussed the Ride-On Flex Program and prepared a CoA letter to Montgomery County's Director of Transportation outlining recommendations to make the pilot Program more Age-Friendly. In April, Committee members met with representatives from the Transportation Department to discuss the Program.

**Upcoming research.** In 2020, Committee members will look at how different models of intergenerational housing can be encouraged in Montgomery County; how the supply of intergenerational housing can be increased and what developers can do to encourage this; and how the CoA can advocate for more affordable housing for older adults. The Committee will also focus on jobs for seniors, specifically two areas: (1) employing seniors and addressing age discrimination in employment; and (2) developing a workforce to provide direct home care for the aging population. In addition, the Committee will stay abreast of the status of older adult food security, and also the status of the Ride-On Flex Program and its use by the County's seniors.

### ***Health and Wellness***

**"Gap" Population.** The Committee researched the issues faced by the "Gap" population – those individuals whose income is too high to qualify for Medicaid but too low to afford assisted living – and released a paper on its findings and recommendations. The paper was presented at the CoA's October meeting as well as at the annual Legislative

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Breakfast. It will be sent to the County Executive, the County Council, and a number of Montgomery County government offices.

**Upcoming research.** The “Gap” paper leads to many other topics that the Committee could explore. Members are now in a learning process about the issue of hearing impairments and how they affect social isolation. Audiologist David Barwell spoke at a Committee meeting to discuss this. In addition, Committee members are scheduled to meet with representatives from the Hearing Loss Association of America and the Johns Hopkins’ research organization, Access HEARS. The Aging and Community and the Health and Wellness Committees may work together on a project regarding issues surrounding social isolation.

### ***Public Policy***

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the Public Policy Committee takes the lead on much of the Commission’s advocacy on priority issues at the County, State, and Federal levels. The Committee reviewed proposed legislation at these levels, researched relevant topics as needed, and drafted testimony (including budget testimony) and other written documents. The Committee also took the lead in convening the annual Legislative Breakfast.

**Transportation Services Improvement Fund.** The Public Policy Committee took the lead on working with the Commission for Persons with Disabilities in urging the Department of Transportation to issue proposed regulations intended to protect the Fund.

**Other Issues.** The Committee is researching how and whether AARP’s Age-Friendly status will be possible for the State of Maryland. The Committee is also looking at voter accessibility issues. In addition, on behalf of the CoA, the Public Policy Committee advocated successfully for a return to the “Senior Initiative Budget” as itemized under former County Executive Ike Leggett.

Also, in 2019, the Public Policy Committee, on behalf of the CoA, wrote to the 23 Commissions on Aging throughout the State to invite representatives to discuss forming a State coalition that could share information and advocate together on issues affecting older Marylanders. The letters were followed up with in-person contacts. However, the effort was not as successful as hoped, in large part because most other Commissions and Councils on Aging lack the CoA’s ability to advocate at the State level.

### ***Communications and Community Outreach Task Force (formerly the Communications and Community Outreach Committee)***

In consultation with the Executive Committee and members of the Communications and Community Outreach Committee, the CoA Chair designated the Committee as a Task Force. As such, the group will operate less formally, but with more versatility, meeting as needed and serving as a resource to the CoA on communications and messaging issues. The Task Force will continue to be actively involved in the cable access television program, *Seniors Today*.

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**CoA Key Messages.** Noting that it is important that the CoA members be consistent in what they communicate during interviews and written communications, the Task Force developed a slate of key messages that CoA members can reference. Also, the Task Force plans to be involved when CoA members receive requests for interviews and will maintain a list of media contacts.

**Seniors Today.** A Task Force member is currently guest hosting this monthly cable access television program which is co-produced by the CoA and the County. The program airs several times each month and is also available on the County's YouTube channel. Recent guests included:

Marc Elrich, County Executive

Karen Bashir, Neal Potter Path of Achievement Award Honoree

Eileen Bennett, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Director, Aging and Disability Services

Lauren Campbell, Strathmore Hall Foundation, Inc.

Jean Dinwiddie, Chair, Commission on Aging

David Gamse, Jewish Council on Aging

Ellie Giles, CEO, Worksource Montgomery

Ali Levingston, Vice President of Leadership Programs, Leadership Montgomery

Tom Manger, Chief, Montgomery County Police

Seth Morgan, Chair, Commission on People with Disabilities

Mona Negm, Founder and President, American Muslim Senior Society

James Stowe, Director, Office of Human Rights

Anita Vassallo, Montgomery County Libraries

Diane Vū, Director, Office of Community Partnerships

Also featured on the show were representatives from: Worksource Montgomery, Senior Leadership Montgomery, Encore Chorale, Montgomery County Stroke Association, Montgomery County Recreation Department, the Olney Theatre Center, the Master Gardeners of Montgomery County, Montgomery County Consumer Protection, Elder Abuse Awareness, Montgomery County's Senior Nutrition Program, the Maryland State's Attorney's Office, the 50+ Volunteer Network, Montgomery County Volunteer Center, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Round House Theatre, Montgomery County Community Action, Senior Corps, Montgomery County Department of Aging and Disability Services, AARP Maryland, and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. An advance planning consultant also appeared.

### **2019 Commission on Aging Plans for 2020**

The Commission on Aging will undertake the following activities in 2020:

- Meet regularly in standing Committees and as a full Commission to implement Commission goals and priorities.

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- Continue engaging with elected officials and Department heads on important older adult issues in the County.
- Identify and examine one or more focus areas of importance to older adults in the County.
- Convene a Public Forum in March 2020.
- Meet with County Council members on CoA budget priorities in April 2020.
- Advocate on priority issues, including budget issues, at the County, State and Federal levels.
- Identify 2021 priorities and FY22 County budget priorities.
- Host a Legislative Breakfast in November 2020.
- Continue to participate in the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Advisory Group and workgroups and monitor implementation of the Age-Friendly strategic plan as appropriate.
- Monitor use of the Transportation Safety Improvement Fund and the Housing Initiative Fund as they impact older adults and advocate as needed.
- Attend Department of Health and Human Services' quarterly Board, Committee, and Commission meetings and prepare quarterly reports.
- Collaborate with other Boards, Committees, Commissions, and other groups as appropriate.
- Other activities as identified.

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**2019-2020 Commission on Aging**



**Seated left to right:** Dr. Odile Brunetto, Acting Chief, Aging and Disability Services and Director, Area Agency on Aging; Morris Klein; Jean Dinwiddie, Chair; Miriam Kelty; Barbara Selter; Janice Zalen; Ruby Moone; Tho Tran. **Standing left to right:** Stephanie Edelstein; Karon Phillips; Mary Sweeney; Arunima Ghosh; Arthur Williams; Karen Maricheau; Hilery Tsumba; Ryan Wilson, Vice Chair; Edgar Rivas; Neal Brown; Richard Jourdenais and Beverly Rollins, Secretary. **Not pictured:** Amoke Alakoye; Barbara Brubeck; Morton Faller; Amy Harbison; Nanine Meiklejohn; Deborah Royster; Monica Schaeffer; Odessa Shannon; Marsha Weber.

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**Montgomery County Council**  
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**Seated:** Will Jawando, Council President Sidney Katz, Nancy Navarro, Evan Glass  
**Standing:** Hans Riemer, Gabriel Albornoz, Craig Rice, Andrew Friedson, Tom Hucker



**Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services**  
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