

Commission on Aging Montgomery County, Maryland 2024 Annual Report



Commission on Aging, December 2024 Community for a Lifetime
Award Ceremony and Luncheon

Commissioners from left to right: Back row; Willie (Don) McCullough, Wayne Berman, Norman Goldstein, Yvette Monroe, Dixie P. Butler, Marsha Weber (Alumna), Bob Levey, Kate Stein, Beverly Rollins, Mary Sweeney (Alumna); Front row; Joyce Dubow, Janice Zalen, Betsy Carrier, Elaine Binder (Alumna), Vernell DeWitty, Rev Vikram (Alumna), Marcia Pruzan (Alumna), Virginia Cain, Morris Klein, Kathleen McGuiness, Barbara Selter (Alumna), Jean Dinwiddie, Katie Smith, David Engel, Art Williams. Commissioners not in photo; Laurie Pross, Arunima Ghosh, Kendell Matthews, Sibio Ncube, Rick Ricciardi, Anna Maria Izquierdo-Porrera, Linda Bergofsky, Marie Sloan, Liz Barnes, Eleanor Tanno

Boards, Committees, and Commissions Department of Health and Human Services

2024 Annual Report



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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.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:

(f) 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. (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. (h) 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 services for older adults.

Letter from the Chair, David Engel



The Montgomery County Commission on Aging (CoA) is pleased to provide its Annual Report for 2024. The Report describes the key activities of the Commission as an advisor to the County Executive, County Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other County departments 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 2024, the Commission on Aging had a robust schedule of monthly educational meetings and achieved significant accomplishments within the four very active Commission committees which are outlined in this report. The Commission started the year in January by sending a letter to Governor Moore to extend our congratulations and support on the significant milestone achieved with the signing of the executive order for the Longevity Ready Maryland Initiative.

Also in January, Katie Smith, host of 50+ in Montgomery County, talked with Montgomery County Council President Andrew Friedson. 50+ continued its tremendous programming throughout the year with guests including Maryland Department of Aging Secretary Carmel Roques.

The full Commission on Aging met with County Executive Elrich in March to exchange views on the FY25 proposed Budget. The CoA members were able to voice concerns on issues important to our constituency and hear the County Executive's perspective prior to the County Council Budget FY 25 negotiations.

Our Public Policy Committee provided a record number of letters of support and testimony in February and March during the 2024 General Assembly Session. In February and March, Commissioner Betsy Carrier testified in person for support of HB1103 and SB875; the Miriam Keltz Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program.

Commissioner Betsy Carrier is pictured along with House bill sponsor Delegate Sarah Wolek and Maryland Department of Aging Secretary, Carmel Roques.



Attending the bill signing along with Governor Moore are Commissioners Laurie Pross and Kendell Matthews.



In May, our Annual Public Forum was held at the Executive Office Building with over 100 in-person participants to discuss housing. Keynote speakers included Samar Jha of AARP, providing an overview of national policy and regulatory challenges and solutions. The second keynote was provided by Dr. Linna Zhu of the Urban Institute, honing in and highlighting on the realities of housing issues in Montgomery County. A full report can be found on the [CoA website](#).



Commissioner Morris Klein representing the Commission on Aging, thanked Council member Sayles, the Montgomery County Council, and County Executive Elrich on celebrating National Senior Citizens Day on September 10th 2024.



“National Senior Citizens Day raises awareness about the issues and challenges that senior citizens may face, and to honor the value they are to Montgomery County. How true is the saying that you don’t get old, you get wiser. It is a day to recognize that wisdom and experience and the contribution seniors have made to enrich our wonderful community. Improved healthcare has changed demographics and increased productivity of our older citizens, allowing them to be more active than ever before.

As a member of the Commission of Aging, I can tell you that age and retirement do not impede the “seniors” from fully participating in work to enhance our community.

Of course, nature takes its course and we all eventually get frail. National Senior Citizens Day is also a time to ensure Seniors maintain a good quality of life. This proclamation serves as a reminder that we must cherish, respect, and support our older adult citizens every day, not just on this special occasion. Montgomery County, and the Commission in particular, aim to do just that - to ensure that our older residents have access to the resources, programs, and services they need to live fulfilling lives, free from ageism, isolation, and hardship.

In 1988, President Reagan signed the proclamation establishing the first Senior Citizen Day - words as accurate now as then:

Throughout our history, older people have achieved much for our families, our communities, and our country. That remains true today, and gives us ample reason this year to reserve a special day in honor of the senior citizens who mean so much to our land. For all they have achieved throughout life and for all they continue to accomplish, we owe older citizens our thanks and a heartfelt salute. We can best demonstrate our gratitude and esteem by making sure that our communities are good places in which to mature and grow older — places in which older people can participate to the fullest and can find the encouragement, acceptance, assistance, and services they need to continue to lead lives of independence and dignity.”

We concluded the year in December with our Community for A Lifetime Award Ceremony and year end luncheon held at Brookside Gardens in Silver Spring with over 50 Commissioners, Liaisons, and supporters of the CoA.

The Commission on Aging could not have made any accomplishments without the support of County staff. In this regard, we express our deep appreciation to DHHS Director Dr. James Bridgers, Jr. In addition, we acknowledge the wise counsel and outstanding support and guidance of the Chief of Montgomery County’s Aging and Disability Services, Dr. Patrice McGhee and Director of Montgomery County’s Area Agency on Aging Director, Dr. Kimberly Johnson.

The following AAA staff also provide invaluable and outstanding assistance to the Commission: Peter Flandrau and Peter Illig, Community Outreach Managers and primary liaisons to the CoA, the Executive Committee and the Public Policy Committee; Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator; Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator and liaison to the Aging in Community Committee; Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator, liaison to the Health and Wellness Committee; and Jennifer Long, Supervisor of the Aging and Disability Resource Unit (ADRU) and liaison to the Communications Committee. Their contributions are invaluable to the Commission and to the well-being of all older adults in the County. We are also fortunate to work with Shawn Brennan as the Age Friendly Coordinator and the leader for the Summit on Aging.

The Commission looks forward to ongoing engagement and positive action on matters that significantly affect the quality of life of the County’s older adult residents and their families.

Respectfully,

David Engel

David Engel, Chair

Annual Report from the Commission on Aging January-December 2024

BCC Representative: David Engel, Chair; Laurie Pross, Secretary

Mission

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging (COA) advises the County Executive, County Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as other County departments on the interests, needs and problems facing older adults in Montgomery County. The Commission identifies significant issues where its voice on the needs of older adults can make a difference. The COA supports both safety-net services for the frail elderly and programs to meet the interests and needs of the county's older adult residents who want to age in their communities.

Composition

The Commission on Aging consists of no fewer than 18 members appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. At the conclusion of 2023, there were 26 members. Members must be county residents of whom a majority are 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.

CoA Membership 2024

David Engel, Wayne Berman, Virginia Cain, Betsy Carrier, Jean Dinwiddie, Joyce Dubow, Nkiru Ezeani, Arunima Ghosh, Mona Grieser, Morris Klein, Bob Levey, Kendell Matthews, Yvette Monroe, Sibon Ncube, Laurie Pross, Richard Ricciardi, Beverly Rollins, Barbara Selter, Katie Smith, Mary Sweeney, Arthur Williams, Janice Zalen, Linda Bergofsky, Rena Eichler, Norman Goldstein, Anna Maria Izquierdo-Porrera, Marie Sloan, Kate Stein, Kathleen M. McGuinness

New Commissioners as of October 2024: Liz Barnes, Eleanor Tanno, Dixie P Butler, Vernell DeWitty, Willie Don McCullough

Commission Officers

David Engel, Chair

Virginia Cain, Vice Chair

Wayne Berman, Assistant Vice Chair

Laurie Pross, Secretary

Nkiru Ezeani, Treasurer

Committee Chairs

Aging in Community: Wayne Berman and Betsy Carrier

Health and Wellness: Marcia Pruzan (CoA Alumna) and Marsha Weber

Public Policy: Morris Klein and Kate Stein

Communications: Jean Dinwiddie and Beverly Rollins

Staff

Dr. Patrice McGhee, Chief, Aging and Disability Services; Dr. Kimberly Johnson, Acting Director, Area Agency on Aging; Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator; Peter Flandrau/Peter Illig, Community Outreach Managers; Tremayne Jones, Office Services Coordinator; Tina Purser-Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator, Jennifer Long, Supervisor, ADRU

County Liaisons

Denise Israel, Montgomery County Department of Transportation; Shawn Brennan, Age-Friendly Montgomery; Jim Resnick, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue; Robin Riley, Montgomery County Department of Recreation; Stacey Sigler, Sara Swarr, Kathleen Liebersen, Montgomery County Department of Recreation; Ama Lee, African American Health Program; Phoebe Shih, Asian American Health Initiative; Somer Cross, Department of Housing and Community Affairs; Carol Craig, Senior Nutrition Program; Ingrid Lizama, Latino Health Initiative

Area Agency on Aging

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is responsible for the provision of the 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 serves as the local entity that administers a far-reaching suite of programs and services to help older adults 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..." The AAA continues to

work closely with our peers and allies in DHHS to ensure all-encompassing service delivery and to provide credible and timely communication to the older adults in our community.

Monthly Meetings

Commission on Aging (CoA) meetings were open to the public and were held from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month (except for August). Most meetings were held virtually. Minutes of all meetings were posted on the CoA website.

The Commission has four standing committees: Health and Wellness, Aging in the Community, Public Policy, and Communications, as well as an Executive Committee, each of which met at least monthly. All meetings were open to the public except the Executive Committee. With the exception of the Executive Committee, members of the standing committees were not required to be commissioners to participate. The Executive committee consisted of the officers of the commission and the chairs of the committees. Occasionally, working groups were established to work on a particular issue that required specific focus, such as the working group that planned and organized the annual forum sponsored by the CoA in May. Following is a brief description of the work of the standing committees during 2024:

Health and Wellness - The committee worked on the development and changes to our series of factsheets that address important issues older adults should consider as they age. Mental health resources and programs continued to be a focus area for this committee in 2024.

Aging in Community - The committee conceived, organized, and executed the CoA's annual Public Forum in May 2024. (See section on Forum, below.) Beyond focusing on accessible and affordable housing for older adults, the Aging in Community Committee (AIC) focused on technology, food insecurity, design for life and universal design, and the Villages. Specific AIC concerns about housing were addressed in meetings between County officials and the AIC in preparation for the 2024 Public Forum on housing. The committee was briefed several times on the progress of the County Task Force, led by Somer Cross of DHCA, on revisions to the MPDU program to include new senior living communities.

Public Policy - The committee monitored and reviewed legislative proposals of significance to older adults at the county and state levels and identified proposals that merited the commission's support. In addition, the committee continued to advocate for resolving concerns about nursing home inspections in the county. Members met with the Maryland Department of Health to describe frustration and concern in dealing with the issue; they wrote letters describing the ongoing concerns; and continued to be in contact with appropriate county officials to try to reach timely resolution regarding the state's failure to conduct and oversee an effective nursing home inspection process.

Communications - The Committee helped maintain and update the CoA member orientation booklet and Briefing book to ensure they are current. The committee planned and implemented a Library Liaison and Ambassadors program and planned and broadcast the 50+ program on the county cable channel where guests from a variety backgrounds and organizations were interviewed. (See below.)

Major Accomplishments

Advocacy

- ***CoA FY 2025 Budget Priorities***

In October 2023, the commission chair, David Engel, presented the commission's FY2025 top two budget priorities to the county council: 1 - Hire a permanent Marketing and Outreach staff person in the Department of Aging Disability Services to promote the many County programs available to older adults; and 2 - Hire a full-time Implementation Manager to ensure that the County Executive mandated Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Task Force recommendations are fully recognized and implemented.

- ***CoA FY 2026 Budget Priorities***

In October 2024, Commission chair, David Engel, presented the Commission's FY2026 top priorities and advocacy issues to the HHS Committee of the County Council with a follow up report on the associated costs. The Committee was also presented with the suggestions for the revisions to the Design for Life program, the Ambassador Program Pilot report, the Public Forum 2024 on Housing report, and an update of the CoA efforts to restore the County MOU with the State on Nursing Home Inspections and oversight. The Commission on Aging took an expanded view on how to present priorities and advocacy issues during the July 2024 meetings of the Executive Committee and the Public Policy Committee. The Commission created a position paper presenting 16 top priorities.

Legislative advocacy

State Legislature testimony

Support for:

- HB0032 that would provide a tax credit for caregivers who care for older family members.
- HB0318/ SB0373, recognizing it as a vital measure to strengthen state laws against mail theft, assault of mail carriers, mail identity theft, and theft from elderly or vulnerable citizens.
- HB0403/SB0443 (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act) that would authorize an individual, under very specific and limited circumstances, to request medical aid in dying.
- SB0076 Continuing Care Retirement Communities - Governing Bodies, Grievances,

- and Entrance Fees.
- HB0349/SB0631 requiring the Department of Aging to contract with an independent consultant to complete an insurance study on public and private options for leveraging resources to help individuals prepare for long-term care services and support needs.
 - SB0875/HB1103 Miriam Keltz Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program bill.
 - SB 1000/ HB1122 reflects the recommendations of the final report of the Maryland Nursing Home Acquisitions Workgroup (Workgroup) to address the potentially negative impacts associated with the increasing role of private equity in nursing home ownership.

County Bill testimony

Support for:

Bill 6-24, Property Tax Credit –Disabled Veterans

Bill 45-23, Property Tax Credit –Individuals 65 and Above, Retired Military

Legislative Breakfast

This annual event was held virtually on December 12, 2024 at 9am.

The agenda for the 12/12/24 legislative meeting included a welcome by Morris Klein, Co-Chair, Public Policy Committee. David Engel provided Commission on Aging 2024 Accomplishments. Linda Bergofsky discussed Nursing Home Oversight. Wayne Berman talked about Housing & Technology. Kate Stein provided an update on the CoA supported County Legislation, and Morris Klein discussed the CoA supported State Legislative Priorities.

Twenty-one State delegates/senators or their representatives attended, all of whom discussed their 2025 initiatives. The Commission heard that there will be numerous proposals addressing the needs of older adults during the upcoming State legislative session, including a renewed effort to reinstate the County MOU for nursing home oversight and the end-of-life bill. Delegate Lily Qi asked for the CoA to help her in a post meeting discussion regarding complexity and confusion surrounding deposits for continuing care communities and the need for better regulation.

Education

The commission routinely received educational briefings from experts on topics of importance to its work and often received recommendations as to how it could be most effective in the areas under discussion. Educational presentations included Q and A sessions. Following is a summary of the speakers who addressed the commission during the year:

Christine Hong, Chief, Services to End and Prevent Homelessness in January. February featured Barry Hudson from the Public Information and Nordea Lewis, Public Information Office, Older Adult representation. In March County Executive, Marc Elrich the discussion included FY25 operating budget, Montgomery County Older Adult issues and initiatives. At April's meeting, Director, Area Agency on Aging, Dr. Kimberly Johnson provided overviews of 5 County supported programs for older adults:

1. Assessment Evaluation and Review Services
2. Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
3. Senior Care Program
4. Support Planning Agency
5. Assisted Living Subsidy

In May, Connie Row, President, Montgomery County Villages Consortium discussed the lack of funding from the County on the Consortium need in FY25. She invited Rafael Murphy, Director of Grants Management who gave an overview of the revised Grants process and insight into the detrimental changes that it created. Guests at the meeting included, Sarah Wolek, State Delegate, District 16 and Claudia Fess, Chief of Staff for Sarah Wolek. June's monthly meeting topics were Attainable Housing Strategies, with Benjamin Berbert, Countywide Planning & Policy and ARC of Montgomery with Julia Abate.

In July, the Commission heard reports from Committee Chairs on the top priorities and advocacy issues. In August, there was no full CoA meeting. The CoA voted and rank ordered the advocacy issues and budget priorities. The September meeting featured guest speaker Gilberto Zelaya, PhD, CERA, Community Engagement / Public Relations Officer for the Montgomery County Board of Elections.

The October meeting included a Solo Aging Presentation by Steve Gurney, Managing Director, Positive Aging Community and Joy Loverde, Author, business advisor, keynote speaker, and media spokesperson on topics of caregiving and aging solo. The CoA full Commission meeting November 21st at 9:30 am featured speakers Ruth Kershner, Program Director, Montgomery County Caregiver Program and Marla Lahat, Executive Director, Home Care Partners, an IHAS contractor.

Publications and events available on the CoA website at:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAIndex.htm>

Public Forum

Commission on Aging Public Forum, May 16, 2024

Bringing together public and private stakeholders, non-profits, community groups, and citizens to advance ideas and actions on affordable housing for older adults in Montgomery County is the primary goal behind the Montgomery County Commission on Aging's public forum "Reimagining Housing for Older Adults - Ideas and Actions to make Housing Available, Affordable, and Accessible."

The forum took place on Thursday, May 16, 2024; 9:30 am to 2:30 pm at the Montgomery County Executive Office Building, in Rockville, Maryland.

Three specific goals for the public forum were established by the Commission on Aging (CoA). These goals were:

- Identify modifications to governmental regulations, institutional policies, and financing strategies to achieve increased affordability, accessibility, and availability of a range of housing types.
- Identify the actions needed to overcome the obstacles that deter and or disincentivize the public and private sectors from developing and offering housing to older adults with different characteristics (e.g., income, race, physical and mental status), and
- Identify actions that the CoA, County, and other stakeholders can take to advance the goal of increasing the affordability, availability, and accessibility of housing to meet the needs of the older adult community.

Two keynote addresses set the stage for the day. The first, by Samar Jha of AARP, provided an overview of national policy and regulatory challenges and some solutions. The second, by Dr. Linna Zhu of the Urban Institute, honed in on the realities of housing issues in Montgomery County.

A central part of the public forum was a moderated conversation with the heads of key Montgomery County Agencies (e.g. Planning Department, DHCA, Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC), and Department of Permitting Services), and representatives from the developer and financial communities to address the programs, gaps, and needs for housing for older adults.

At the lunch intermission Montgomery County Council President Andrew Friedson cited the specific steps he and his colleagues have taken to make housing support programs more robust, including seeding \$100 million for the housing fund and \$50 million for the housing preservation fund (which aims to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing). He acknowledged that the Design for Life Property Tax Incentive program needs additional attention to increase the number of residents applying for the program.

Scott Gottbreht, Assistant Secretary of Policy for the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Affairs, provided an overview of how the State of Maryland is responding to housing demands of Maryland's increasingly diverse older adult population. He described the three bills passed in the last General Assembly (referenced above) and how the State DHCA is working to develop policies and regulations needed to implement the new laws. Gottbreht encouraged participants to bring new and promising ideas directly to his office.

CoA Commissioner Kate Stein briefly introduced the goal of the afternoon session - FROM INNOVATION TO ACTION. Participants will be asked to process information from the morning's presentations and discussions to identify some concrete steps the CoA and the County can take going forward. She asked that participants begin this effort by capturing solutions on Post-it notes, including where we should re-double our efforts or take up ideas that have not yet been expressed. She also asked participants to identify the greatest challenges we would face in pursuing these solutions. To help activate the discussion, Stein and Derrigo reviewed the dominant topics submitted by attendees on the Post-it notes. They included a panoply of concerns and solutions most notably renters' protections, home sharing, and addressing barriers to the supply of housing. The moderators invited Somer Cross, Montgomery County DHCA, Matt Losak, CEO of Montgomery County Renter's Alliance, and Dana Johnson, CEO of Homes for America to serve as the discussants on these issues.

Collaboration with other Boards, Commissions, and Committees

The Commission on Aging (CoA) could serve the older residents in the County by being more engaged with the other Boards, Committees, and Commissions in the County. Throughout the first half of 2024, the CoA members have attended a Library Board meeting, an Interagency Commission on Homelessness meeting, and a Board of Social Services meeting.

- The chair, David Engel, attended the JCA Interages Advisory Committee meetings to discuss the Strategic Priorities, get funding updates, and other Committee news.
- The chair represents the CoA at the Age Friendly Advisory Group periodic meetings and Jean Dinwiddie Co-chairs the Age Friendly Communications workgroup domain.
- Attendance at Montgomery County Affordable Housing Summit was supported by the CoA. Three commissioners attended.
- The chair attended the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) meetings to address affordable housing, specifically with regard to Senior Housing and the MPDU program to be expanded to become Moderately Priced Living for Seniors (MPLS).

- Members of the Commission met with 10 of the 11 Council Members of the County Council or their representatives to discuss the CoA's FY25 budget priorities and to learn about the agenda of the elected officials.
- Commissioners Jean Dinwiddie, Virginia Cain, Kate Stein, Beverly Rollins, and David Engel were honored to be present at the Older Americans Month Proclamation at the Montgomery County Council meeting on April 30, 2024 presented by Council member Evan Glass.

Outreach/Liaisons

The commission routinely received updates from Dr. Patrice McGhee, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, and Dr. Kimberly Johnson, Director of the Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to keep the commission apprised of pertinent activities of interest and importance to the work of the commission. These updates typically addressed budget issues, the disposition of ARPA funds and other funds, and special projects overseen by the AAA, and the like.

Liaison Reports - The Commission received reports from community non-profits, advocacy organizations, and county departments that informed the commission of relevant programs, projects, and activities they are conducting for the benefit of older adults.

The commission regularly heard from the African American Health Program; Age Friendly; the Asian American Health Initiative; the Latino Health Initiative; Department of Recreation; the Department of Transportation; Maryland National Park and Planning Commission; The Villages; and Jewish Council for the Aging.

Other Collaborative Activities

Reframe Aging

The Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors (GROWS) and The Maryland Department of Aging held a special presentation, **'Reframe Aging: A Generation's Work,' led by the National Center to Reframe Aging (NCRA)**, to gain an understanding of the need to change the way our society communicates about aging and older adults. Learn more about the power of research-based framing strategies to become more effective framers and increase the impact of your communications and work.

In Longevity Ready Maryland's envisioned future, where Marylanders live longer, healthier, financially secure, socially connected, and purposeful lives, there's no room for ageism nor for the implicit bias about age that consistently impacts our society today. Longevity Ready Maryland seeks to prepare the state to maximize the benefits and opportunities and address the challenges of a rapidly aging society.

The Maryland Department of Aging has partnered with the National Center to Reframe Aging (NCRA), the trusted source for proven communication strategies and tools to effectively frame aging issues to address and end ageism by advancing an equitable story about aging in America. The Commission on Aging is supporting this work through Commissioner participation at this and other presentations.



Library Liaison Program

Working with the County's head librarian, MCPL regional managers, and Aging and Disability staff, the committee established a program where individual CoA members will be responsible for working with one of the Montgomery County Public Library Branches. At that branch, the liaisons establish a working relationship with the librarian and make monthly visits to the library to ensure the library's older adult section is organized, complete, and well-stocked. With the librarian, the CoA liaison periodically evaluates the materials provided. The liaisons work with CoA's Aging and Disability staff to order new materials as needed.

Ambassadors Program

The Committee has implemented the Ambassador Program that seeks to educate older adults about the CoA, relevant County services, programs, and issues and solicit feedback regarding their concerns. Each Ambassador, along with a companion or two, has delivered an approved presentation to groups in the community. Presentations have taken place at Senior Centers, congregate living facilities, libraries, and other locations where older adults gather. Participants have offered valuable feedback on a range of topics that will contribute to the commission's future work. The original Pilot Program ran from 9/2023 to 9/2024. The 26 presentations given reached over 600 older adults. Key areas of concern identified include improved transportation options, enhanced home care resources, expanded volunteer opportunities, and the development of intergenerational programming. Addressing these issues will be crucial for the program's continued success and expansion.

Cable TV 50+ in Montgomery County is a monthly television show hosted by the 50+ in Montgomery interviewed guests from a variety of domains during each quarter: In January, Katie Smith, host of 50+ in Montgomery County, talked with Montgomery County Council President Andrew Friedson. Celebrating Black History Month in February was Arlee Wallace, Program Manager, Monique Gardner, Aging Coordinator, and Dr. Ikenna Myers of the African American Health Program. March guests were Marsha Weber and Marcia Pruzan of the Commission on Aging talking about the Life Transitions as we Age project. In the April episode Katie talked about the joys and benefits of dancing with Sara Swarr from Montgomery County Recreation, Janine Tursini from Arts for the Aging, and Judith Bauer from Quicksilver Dance Company. May's episode talked about Longevity Ready Maryland with Secretary Carmel Roques of the Maryland Department of Aging. June featured Mario Wawrzusin and Dr. Kimberly Johnson from Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services about June being Elder Abuse Awareness Month and the event happening on June 11.

Ingrid Lizama, the Communications Manager of the Latino Health Initiative (LHI) from the Department of Health and Human Services September after a break in programming for July and August.

Guests for October were Ralph Watkins, League of Women Voters and Fire Chief Corey Smedley and Jim Resnick with Montgomery County Fire and Rescue. In November the 50+ In Montgomery County program talked with Ruth Kershner, Program Manager for the National Family Caregiver Support Program. In December Katie Smith talked with Noah O'Ryan from Senior Planet and James Berardi from Montgomery County Recreation.

Age-Friendly Montgomery County

Montgomery County is a World Health Organization (WHO) /AARP designated Age-Friendly Community. 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 workgroups for 10 domains essential to the Age-Friendly community: Civic and Social Involvement; Communication; 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. 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 Commission Chair serves on the advisory group, and CoA members serve on the domain workgroups. Jean Dinwiddie, past CoA Chair, is Co-Chair of the Age-Friendly Communications Domain workgroup.

Community for A Lifetime Awards

The purpose of the “Community for a Lifetime” (CLA) Award is to formally recognize the work being done in the County by individuals or organizations that contributes to the commission’s mission. A nominating committee consisting of commissioners and representatives of the public received and considered nominees. The group was chaired by Wayne Berman, commissioner. The 2024 awards were presented at the December Awards Ceremony and Luncheon at Brookside Gardens,

The following individuals / organizations received 2024 CLA recognition:



Our first recipient is to the Jewish Council for the Aging, Employment Program. The award is in recognition of the work that the JCA Employment Program director and staff have done to provide a full array of employment services to older adults in Montgomery County. Accepting the award for the JCA is Jodie Rasch, the Program Director.



Our second recipient is the ARC of Montgomery Respite Care Program. The award is in recognition of the work that the Director and the ARC of Montgomery program staff have done to provide respite care services to unpaid, live-in, primary caregivers, who are often family members, in Montgomery County. Accepting the award for ARC of Montgomery is the Executive Director, Ms. Julia Abate.



Our third recipient is Leah Bradley, Executive Director of Empowering the Ages. Leah is receiving this award in recognition of her extensive efforts and dedicated work to develop, enhance, and support mutually beneficial Intergenerational Programs between children, youth, families, and older adults in Montgomery County. The award recognizes her long-term service and community leadership in the County to enable the generations to learn from and support each other. Leah will be accepting this award.



Our fourth recipient is Norma Columbus of the Latino Health Initiative for Montgomery County. Ms. Columbus is receiving this award in recognition of the essential work she does as a trained volunteer with the Latino Health Initiative. Her dedicated work directly impacts and improves the lives of many in the Latino community by enabling them to access vital health and human resources in Montgomery County.

Looking Ahead

During the latter part of 2024, the commission began to plan for 2025. In addition to discussing and advocating for the budget and advocacy priorities identified during the summer of 2024 for inclusion in the FY 2026 County budget, the standing committees began to consider the issues that merited “a deeper dive”. The Health and Wellness Committee will continue to consider issues of interest and how best to inform ourselves and others about them. Aging in Community committee identified affordable and accessible housing as an area that affects virtually all older adults in the county in 2024; this committee also heard from several experts to help it formulate an approach to address the issue. At the end of 2024, the Commission as a whole voted that “Revaluing Caregiving” will be the topic of the 2025 Forum to be held in May 2025. A work group to plan this event was formed. The Communications Committee has a continued high demand for Ambassador Presentations and will work in 2025 to formalize and systematize the administration for this tremendous program.

There will be a high intensity focus in the beginning of 2025 to work on delegation authority and funding for Montgomery County Health and Human services to regain control over the oversight of nursing home inspections. The Commission will be supporting legislation being brought forth in Annapolis to achieve this goal.

- The CoA advises the local government on the needs and interests of older adults and their caregivers
- The CoA Interacts with residents, nonprofit partners, and the private sector on issues affecting older adults
- The CoA supports policies that address the growing need for services for older adults of all ages, backgrounds, and ability levels
- The CoA identifies challenges and gaps in services and advocates for public investment to address them.

Recognizing that older adults are the fastest growing demographic in Montgomery County, The Commission on Aging (CoA) advocates to make Montgomery County, Maryland **A Community for a Lifetime.**