

**Commission on Aging
Public Policy Committee
April 12, 2018
Meeting Minutes**

In attendance:

Commissioners: Mort Faller; Stephanie Edelstein; Nanine Meiklejohn; Isabelle Schoenfeld; Jerry Morenoff.

Staff: Odile Brunetto, AAA Director;

Sitting in for Chair Ryan Wilson, Mort called the meeting to order at 9:40 and welcomed attendees.

State Advocacy

The General Assembly adjourned on April 9. Stephanie reported on the status of bills that COA supported this session.

These bills supported by COA passed:

- SB 4 which will establish an oversight committee on quality of care in nursing homes. *Passed enrolled.* http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2018RS/amds/bil_0004/sb0004_82797001.pdf.
- SB 386 to set time frames for OHCQ to investigate serious complaints. *Returned passed.*
- HB 556 to allow the register of wills to waive probate fees for low income heir when all that is involved is real property. *Passed enrolled.*
- HB 1465 to protect homeowners from having house sold at tax sale if taxes owed are \$750 or less, and to provide other protections including notification of legal help and tax credit programs. *Passed. Approved by the Governor.*

The following bills did not pass:

- SB 427 to change the residency requirement for seniors to get local property tax credit from 40 years owning the home to 25 years in the county (not necessarily in same home). *Passed Senate.*
- SB 547 to allow state elections by mail (a letter of support was also sent Rockville City proposal for city elections). *No action.*
- HB 956 to allow for attorneys' fees and treble damages in civil actions by elder abuse victims against perpetrator. *Unfavorable report Judiciary Committee.*
- HB 995 to allow Montgomery County to enact a just cause eviction law. *Unfavorable report, withdrawn. Del. Wilkins will lead summer study.*

There was discussion about other successful bills and about how COA follows up on bills that have passed. One immediate option is to write to the Governor to urge him to sign bills we have supported and that passed. No specific steps were taken to do this. There followed a suggestion that the Health and Wellness Committee consider pursuing the 2017 law that allows Maryland Medical Assistance program to cover dental care.

County Legislative Advocacy

Mort monitors County legislative activity for the Committee. The only recent bills of particular interest are 38-17 and 13-18E.

Isabelle attended the hearing on Bill 38-17, which would increase MPDU requirements. We do not know how many older adults live in MPDUs, so impact on our constituents is unclear. We will monitor and see where and when we should advocate.

Isabelle discussed the County Executive's Bill 13-18E, which would open up the Transportation Services Improvement Fund for general use. TSIF uses a surcharge on Uber/LYFT rides to increase the availability of accessible rides by subsidizing modifications to taxis and other rideshare cars and other incentives. COA supported the legislation that created this program. In a response to a letter of concern about 13-18E from Councilmember Berliner, the Department of Transportation Director stated that the funds will be used to benefit the same population as the original intent. However, the current language of the bill is not this specific. COA is collaborating with the Commission on People with Disabilities on this issue, and Isabelle will testify in opposition to the bill on April 24.

County Budget Advocacy

COA members have been meeting with individual Council members to advocate for COA priority budget items that were not included in the County Executive's budget proposal. While we have been able to cover all the meetings with all Council members, COA participation was unusually low this year. Isabelle will testify on COA budget priorities at the Council hearing on April 12.

Proposal to Create a Statewide Association of Commissions on Aging

At last month's meeting, Mort expressed an interest in reaching out to other Commissions on Aging in the state about collaborating with us on advocacy on statewide issues in a statewide coalition. Odile is seeking a current list of contacts at other Commissions from MDOA. There is a state Commission on Aging, but its only role is to advise MDOA, not to advocate. There was general agreement that this is worth exploring, so Mort will continue to do so.

Other items

Mort reported on a recent training that attended regarding elder abuse and exploitation issues and resources in the county. Tovah Kasdin from ElderSafe described the Hebrew Home shelter for abused elders, and representatives from the State's Attorney's office discussed the tools they have available to prosecute these cases, among other issues. One issue discussed is an apparent reluctance of professionals who are required by state law to report suspected abuse or neglect, to actually do so. On the State's Attorney's "wish list" is a law authorizing the forfeiture of assets of criminal defendants in elder abuse cases. Bills on this issue have failed in committee. (Note: the most recent such bill was HB 255 (2015) sponsored by Delegates Kathleen Dumais and Ben Kramer.)

Odile reported that there will be orientation for our six new Commissioners this week. Isabelle and Stephanie will participate in the orientation.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:51.