



COMMISSION ON AGING

HHS Committee Meeting November 17, 2021 - Priorities for FY 23 Budget

The Commission on Aging (COA) thanks the County Council and the HHS committee for the strong support you have provided to older adults over the years. Our top priorities include:

Fund the expansion of in-home care to more older County residents, including those who do not qualify for State programs.

Older adults overwhelmingly prefer to remain in their own homes; they and their families actively seek home and community-based services (HCBS) to avoid or postpone nursing home placement. Maryland offers Medicaid waiver programs that assist low-income, disabled, and elderly individuals to live in the community. Financial and medical eligibility guidelines for these programs are strict, and the programs have long waiting lists. **COA seeks to expand the number of residents eligible for services and to decrease the time residents wait** to receive assessments and services. **COA recommends that the County increase staffing to improve the timeliness and quality of assessments that determine eligibility** to receive HCBS services.

Many older adults need HCBS but are not eligible for Medicaid. These older adults struggle to afford the support they need to allow them to remain safe, thrive in their homes, and prevent social isolation. **COA urges increases in funding to support them.** Finally, COA urges the County to **examine innovative models in other communities** that meet the medical and social needs of HCBS recipients, allowing aging in place without sacrificing high quality of life.

Increase funding to help market/promote services available for older adults.

The County offers many services for older adult residents with a wide range of needs and abilities. However, many older adults are unaware of these valuable programs. **COA requests dedicated funding to market and promote these services.** Examples of marketing materials include bus signs, postcard mailings, and printed brochures. **COA also requests assigned staffing to help communicate the many available services, such as a Senior Fellow for Communications.**

Closing

COA appreciates the Council's commitment to serving our older residents. We have identified other items for which we will advocate during the budget cycle, including:

- Funding the Access HEARS program
- Restoring cuts to the escorted transportation program
- Expanding funding for the Housing Initiative Fund
- Fully funding the Licensure and Regulatory Nursing Home Inspections Program
- Funding for a full time Facilitator for the Age Friendly Montgomery Program