



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF AGING

April 10, 2023

Hon. Jordan A. Harris
512E Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202186
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2186

Dear Chairman Harris,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional and clarifying information relating to Governor Shapiro's proposed Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget for the Department of Aging. As I mentioned during the hearing, the \$10 million investment in the Department of Aging's PennCARE line-item will help drive out additional resources to older Pennsylvanians through our network of 52 Area Agencies on Aging and reduce the waiting list for services. Additionally, a \$1 million increase to our senior center grant program will allow Senior Community Centers to participate in a non-competitive grant process that provides the opportunity to help many centers with infrastructure needs and expand their outreach to new and existing older adult participants.

I also wanted to address a few questions asked by committee members that required additional information.

Representative Flood requested a breakdown of ARPA funding that the Areas Agency on Aging (AAAs) received, broken out by disbursement method, how much was spent and how much each AAA has left.

As Representative Flood identified, counties were given a choice on the method to receive ARPA funds from the Department. The counties varied in how they chose to have the distributions made, with most counties spreading the funding across two or three years. I will note that one county (Erie) chose to receive all ARPA funding up front. Please see the attached spreadsheet breaking out the ARPA funding disbursement method and annual allocations to the AAA network.

Representative Mayes requested information on the Department's efforts to serve LGBTQ+ older adult communities.

The Department has taken a leadership position among state aging units in developing initiatives to expand its reach to LGBTQ+ seniors. PDA has held two aging summits for LGBTQ+ community members, stakeholders and aging services providers, and encourages staff and the Area Agencies on Aging to participate in cultural competency training from SAGE the nation's largest advocacy organization for LGBTQ+ older adults.

The Department began capturing sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data beginning on October 1, 2021. This action was taken in order to ensure that we could be inclusive of LGBTQ older adult communities in our programs and services. Like all demographic data on individuals, SOGI data is used to help understand the total person and assist them in finding responsive services that they need to feel their unique needs are being supported. My office will be reaching out to Representative Mayes to set up a meeting to explore how SOGI data can best be used to outreach to LGBTQ communities.

Representative Kinhead asked about the differing treatment between single applicants for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program, as opposed to applications by individuals whose spouses are deceased.

We reached out to the Department of Revenue, who administers the program, for further clarification on the nuances of the program. Based on that conversation, our understanding is that there is not separate treatment for single filers as opposed to widowed filers. I recommend touching base with the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue for additional details.

Representative Lawrence asked which counties are currently under “agency oversight” and asked for a summary of each AAA that has oversight in place.

We strive for continual improvement in the AAA network so the number of AAAs under a process improvement plan is dynamic and changing, as we monitor AAAs and strive for continual improvement within the aging network. A process improvement plan provides a roadmap for improvement and guiderails to support an AAA in their goal of supporting and protecting older Pennsylvanians. I have included a list of AAAs that are currently non-compliant in the state network along with a summary of their process improvement plan action items. I would like to note that because we believe in continuous program improvement, the Department also has process improvement plans for some AAAs that are currently in compliance status.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present the Governor’s proposed budget for the Department of Aging. Please know that I am always ready to assist the General Assembly in bettering the lives of Pennsylvania’s older adults.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Kavulich".

Jason Kavulich
Acting Secretary