



Acting Secretary of Aging Teresa Osborne

House Appropriations Committee Hearing
March 9, 2015

Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek and Members of the House Appropriations Committee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present Governor Wolf's Proposed Fiscal Year 2015-2016 budget for the Pennsylvania Department of Aging.

Governor Wolf's nomination of me to serve as the Secretary of Aging is a privilege. As an advocate for older adults, who began working in the Aging network during her college years as a caseworker in a local Meals on Wheels agency, to my days working as a protective services investigator, along with a host of other human service experiences, the opportunity to serve, protect and advocate for the rights of Older Pennsylvania's at this particular time in our Commonwealth's history is an incredible gift that is treasured deeply.

The mission of the Department of Aging (PDA) is to "enhance the quality of life of all older Pennsylvanians by empowering diverse communities, the family and the individual". All Pennsylvanians- including our seniors- deserve the same opportunities, no matter what their race, sexual orientation, where they started their life or who they are. As a Department entrusted with the responsibility to support individuals and families in need, we are committed to Governor Wolf's vision that a government that works is a government that serves and protects its most vulnerable citizens.

Pennsylvania is currently home to over 2.7 million people over the age of 60, over 300,000 of whom are over the age of 85. By 2020 it is estimated that one in four Pennsylvanians will be age 60 and older. This statistic ranks PA as the 4th oldest state in the nation. You may be surprised to know that last year the department reached a milestone in the fact that we were for the first time, able to serve over 1 million individuals with some type of program or service.

I am honored to be part of Governor Wolf's leadership team as he has tasked me with upholding his commitment to protecting our growing senior population. On the Friday just prior to Governor Wolf's first Budget Address, he unveiled a Senior Plan of legislative and budgetary actions intended to provide choice and protections for seniors as they age. Over the next couple of months, Acting Secretary of Human Services, (DHS) Ted Dallas and I will work with key stakeholders to develop an action plan that addresses the current income and health obstacles that too often prevent our seniors from being able to age in place in their homes and communities.

The package is designed to provide choices for seniors, efficiencies in home-and community-based care delivery, and protections so that seniors receive the high quality

level of care that they seek and deserve. Services that are provided by a qualified workforce. Services that are delivered in a timely manner so that unnecessary nursing home stays are prevented. Services that meet the needs of our seniors as they age in place with dignity and respect. This initiative is comprised of the following combination of budget, legislative and executive actions:

Expand Services for Older Pennsylvanians and Reduce Long Term Care Costs. The upcoming 2015-2016 budget expands home- and community-based long term care programming by allowing more than 5,500 additional individuals to obtain care in their home this year.

Phase in Medicaid Managed Long Term Care. DHS in partnership with PDA will pursue the implementation of managed long term care through engaging stakeholders to ensure that the system is person-centered, breaks down barriers, and fills in the gaps that currently exist in the long term care services and supports system. This initiative, which was recommended by the recent Pennsylvania Long Term Care Commission, will result in a more strategic care delivery system and improved health outcomes for seniors.

Improve Long Term Living Waiver Enrollment and Service Plan Development Process. The current process of enrollment into the Commonwealth's Medicaid-sponsored home- and community-based care services is a paper process and has numerous areas of duplication and inefficiencies that delay services being provided to these consumers. DHS and PDA are currently developing a work plan to automate and streamline this process so that services are delivered in timely manner and unnecessary nursing home stays are prevented.

Home Modifications through Selective Contracting. A major barrier to individuals remaining in their homes is accessibility. Under the DHS home- and community-based services waivers, enrolled consumers are eligible for modifications to their homes to prevent admissions to nursing homes, and allow individuals to age in place. Unfortunately, current program barriers occasionally make it difficult for modifications to be made in a timely manner, forcing consumers into nursing care while waiting for the modifications to be made. The proposal to establish a coordinated program to manage the home modifications across all of the home- and community-based waivers, through a comprehensive selective contracting model that will establish a team of specialists to allow for more timely services, improved quality and greater accountability for waiver consumers.

Implement Online Homecare Registry. According to PHI PolicyWorks (PHI), Pennsylvania's direct care workforce in 2013 consisted of 194,670 workers. By 2022, the direct care workforce is projected to grow by 33 percent. PDA is currently working to develop an online tool to make it easier for workers to find stable employment opportunities and for consumers to find competent care.

Ensure Seniors have Choices about Where to Age. Ensuring that the home care sector is able to attract qualified and competent caregivers so that seniors have the option to age at home or community-based setting is a top priority of the Wolf Administration. Governor Wolf is signing Executive Order 2015-05 to form the Governor's Advisory Group on Participant-Directed Home Care and direct the Secretary of the Department of Human Services to regularly meet and discuss issues of mutual concern with a representative for Direct Care Workers. These actions will ensure that home care workers have a voice in shaping the future of their industry in Pennsylvania and seniors have choices about where to receive care. The budget also provides more home health care options for seniors so they can live at home for as long as they want to live there.

Another key to allowing our seniors to remain in their homes and communities is to address property taxes. Governor Wolf's budget proposes to lower property taxes for all citizens. While this will ease the burden on, in particular, low income and middle-class homeowners, it will also bring much needed relief to seniors living on fixed incomes, some of whom have been forced to give up the very home they have lived in their entire life simply because they cannot afford to pay their property taxes. Reducing property taxes will make it possible for many older Pennsylvanian's to stay in their homes; and for some senior citizens their property taxes may be eliminated altogether.

As a former director of two local Area Agencies in Northeast Pennsylvania, I too am quite thankful that our network of local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) have received funding increases in recent years to eliminate waiting lists and/or enhance services so that additional older Pennsylvanian's are served. I also share the concern that as additional dollars are allocated to services and programs that we practice prudence and diligence while adhering to fiscal practices that are characterized by responsibility, transparency and accountability.

I look forward to working with you, the Aging Network and other concerned stakeholders in the days ahead to ensure that a government that works is a government that commits funding to Pennsylvanian's in need of home and community based services, delivers quality, cost effective care, focuses on outcomes, and protects its most vulnerable citizens.