

GROWS Advocacy Committee report: 3/30/21

Topics:

1) The Advocacy Committee is drafting a letter that has the objective of spreading awareness of GROWS to organizations that intersect in the Older Adult Service Provider and Caregiver space. Suggestion that it should be a two page fact sheet with a member directory.

2) At the February CoA meeting: Speaker: Robert Jensen, Greenhouse Nursing Facilities Presentation will be posted with the March report. Maryland did very poorly comparably across the country with respect to COVID nursing home performance. MD is 34th in State aid for HCBS. 300-400 Greenhouse homes in U.S. None in MD.

Enrico Lachico (OHCQ) enlightened the CoA with the news that MD is taking over surveying of 34 nursing homes in MoCo and reducing staff to do the job as if July 1.

Promotion for **National HealthCare Decisions Day- Webinar, April 16, 2021 @ 9 am. Via Zoom Honoring the Medical Wishes of Those We Love: A Latino Community Perspective** Anyone concerned about, serving, or touched by a serious illness in the Latino community, including healthcare providers, hospice and palliative care staff, payers, patients, and caregivers. – flyer to be posted.

March 25th meeting speakers were Josiah Yiu and Carrie Neiman of Access HEARS. They discussed the programs they administer through Access HEARS to provide low cost hearing devices to seniors. The Commission is very interested in how the County can collaborate with Access HEARS and develop a program locally.

April 22nd meeting is Leah Bradley, Empowering The Ages & Aditi Merchant www.bigandmini.org.

3) The CoA Task Force to counter social isolation and loneliness in Montgomery County (SILoS) has a date of May 18th from 10 to 11:30am. Speakers include Dr. Liz Necka from NIA, NIH, Lynda Flowers, AARP, and Scott Code from Leading Age. I think it will be a great program to promote to the GROWS membership. The event will be open to the public but the target audience will be those professionally invested in this topic not only for helping the community in general but for program planning, public policy planning, community outreach and education.

4) CoA, Aging in Community: GROWS liaison and Commissioner Mary Sweeney reported Senior Transportation was the topic of the March 9 meeting. Shawn Brennan, Mobility Manager for MC talked about the important role the COA plays in advocating for services for seniors. An overview and discussion of Transportation Aspects Thrive 2050 Plan was given by David Anspacher and Khalid Agzal, MD Department of Planning. Sam Oji from MC DOT talked about key transportation programs for older adults and Sara Fought from JCA provided an overview of senior transportation programs available in the county.

5) CoA, Health & Wellness heard from GROWS members Tom Najar, Owner of Care Plus. Tom discussed “Flex Care” home care services. Flex care fills the gap between IL and AL to provide on demand ½ service increments in an affordable

way. Tom's company has value added services to reduce SLoS in the congregate care settings where they have a presence. In buildings Care Plus provides Flex Care, turnover was reduced from 15% to 5%.

6) CoA, Public Policy Committee: discussed the bills to be followed this General Assembly session. There are over 1500 registered. To see past letters: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COATestimony.html>

The CoA supports SB 204, Health Care Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Memory Care and Alzheimer's Disease Unit Regulations, which require that the Maryland Department of Health promulgate specific standards for governing memory care and Alzheimer's disease units in Assisted Living Programs. The Commission firmly believes that the standards enumerated in this proposed legislation are absolutely necessary to ensure quality of care for the vulnerable residents served in these programs.

The Public Policy Committee is extremely concerned with the reduction in County surveyors at nursing homes and the elimination of 10 positions in the County. The budget savings should be allocated to Senior Programs. There will be a letter to be sent to the State and to the County to find out how the County allowed this to happen without a study.

The Public Policy Committee is drafting talking points for the County Council meetings coming up.

Please check and promote the GROWS calendar for great educational and networking events. Promote the GROWS directory and website in your regular emails and correspondence.

The next GROWS Advocacy committee meets monthly on Zoom the 4th Tuesday of the month at 1pm.