

TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND EXECUTIVE

ADMINISTRATION

OVERSIGHT HEARING

FOR

D.C. COMMISSION ON AGING

January 10, 2022

Good morning, Chairperson Anita Bonds and members of The Committee on Housing and Executive Administration. I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of The Commission on Aging.

As Commissioners task with advising the Mayor, The City Council, The Department of Aging and Community Living, and The Public concerning the views and needs of seniors in the District of Columbia, The Commission on Aging details the activities it has participated in and what it has learned in FY21-FY22.

The Commission on Aging meets monthly with The Department of Aging and Community Living, Ex-Officio's, and requested presenters. The Commissioners also participate in conference calls during the month to address issues as they arise.

The majority of the Commission activities were via Zoom and Webex due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual meetings consisted of Age-Friendly Task Force, Wellness Centers monthly assembly meetings, Ward 4 and Ward 8 mini-commission meetings, Senior Villages programs and Police Department monthly safety meetings.

The Commission stated goals for FY21-FY22 were to address senior housing, real estate taxes, expansion of senior villages into all eight Wards, efforts to increase home healthcare aides, to continue networking with health organizations in addressing the pandemic, and to try to support as many in the senior community as possible.

The Commissioners in an effort to address senior housing did several things. Commissioners worked with senior housing managers to help seniors fill out forms and obtain necessary documents. Commissioners worked with seniors up until the last day to get rental assistance. Commissioners visited senior buildings throughout the city, and participated in activities with residence. Commissioners visited the New Assisted Living facility in Ward 8 to hear and see the impact on its residence.

One senior living at the facility stated, "Moving into the assisted living facility is like being released from jail. I had spent the last seven years in a nursing home with many limitations and no control of my finances."

The commission has continued to work with The Department of Health and Health Organizations to register and get COVID-19 vaccines to senior facilities and to seniors in their homes.

Commissioners visited Iona Daycare facility where they had an opportunity to observe the various programs and interact with participants.

The Commission stated goals for FY21-FY22 have not been realized for the past three years, some improvements, but not enough for our Seniors. These goals are the many faceted challenges our Senior still face in our lucrative economy.

Followings are listings of the many goals we would like to see finally implemented for FY22:

An increase in resources to recruit Home Health Care Aides. The shortage in Home Health Care Aides has become a TRUE CRISIS to seniors and caregivers.

Create more affordable housing without AMI influences.

Property Tax relief for Seniors and more assistance for Seniors below the Federal poverty level

The Treasury Department must reclassify the guidelines for poverty among Seniors.

Ensuring Seniors have care with dignity and additional resources for mental health and isolation.

Seniors who are financially compromised pay Real Property Tax as a utility bill for example Pepco or Washington Gas.

More support for contractors that service the Senior community; better access to IPADS, laptops, and affordable Internet connections.

More affordable housing that have space for Seniors to move about without being cramped. Many seniors require more space in order to accommodate walkers, wheelchairs and canes.

Reassess Seniors finances based on when they retired. Keep in mind during the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties their income was not commiserate with the wages of today.

Transportation is a lifeline for most Seniors and additional funding is necessary to complement their lifestyle. Not scooters or bicycles that are blocking the sidewalks and causing safety hazards. Also, more handicap accessible transportation to accommodate walkers, wheelchairs, and canes.

More cost-effective healthcare that will realistically assist with the care of Dementia, Alzheimer any debilitating metal illness confronting today's Seniors.

The Wellness Center are short-staff, and we need an on-sight Facilities person and an increase in salary.

Establish a precedent to allow commissioners to stay until the commission has a replacement for them going forward helping the commission to continue accomplishing its goals and delivering services to seniors. Consider a stipend for Commissioners.

Expand the Department of Recreations budget for senior activities, sites and programs.

Consider a stipend for Commissioners.