

GROWS Advocacy Committee meeting report: 10/27/20

Attendees:

Isabelle Melese-d'Hospital, Melissa Wu, David Engel, Gauri Chande, Melissa Koppal, Chuck Kauffman, Gloria Arnold and Robin Henoch

Discussion topics:

1) November is National Caregivers Month.

The theme for 2020's **National Family Caregivers Month** is "Caregiving in Crisis." During NFC Month 2020, Caregivers Action Network (<https://caregiveraction.org/>) will be addressing the new realities family caregivers face with their loved ones during these uncertain times.

2) The City of Gaithersburg proposed zoning ordinance was discussed as it negatively impacts Gaithersburg senior housing. B.F. Saul would like to sell the Gaithersburg Holiday Inn to Montgomery County H.O.C. to add 160 affordable senior housing units. The zoning amendment will create a barrier for future senior housing in the City. The Commission on Aging will be following this issue. There is a public hearing on November 16th. Any GROWS member interested in sending a letter or testifying should learn more at http://gaithersburgmd.igmd.com/Citizens/Detail_LegalNotice.aspx?ID=1167. Representing the Holiday Inn is Ellen Coren. She can be reached at 240-800-3306 and ellencoren@chesapeakestrategies.com

3) CoA, Aging in Community: met on 10/6/2020 with the **Health & Wellness Committee**

E.A. Casey was the speaker on social isolation and provided news on current research and interventions. Casey was the project manager on the AARP Foundation www.Connect2affect.com website. Casey helped research and publish: *Combatting Social Isolation Among Older Adults in a Time of Physical Distancing: The COVID-19 Social Connectivity Paradox*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7396644/>

The committees formed a Task Force to address social isolation and loneliness in Montgomery County. For information on the Task Force meetings, contact David Engel.

4) CoA, Public Policy Committee: met on 10/6/2020

The Public Policy Committee ranked the CoA Budget Priorities. The top two are adding 2 social worker positions in APS/ Public Guardianship and Providing legal assistance to renters at risk of eviction. The CoA will provide a letter to the County Council and testify in November to promote the two priorities.

COVID-19 testing for health care workers letter has been paused, due to concerns by county staff that it does not reflect the current state of testing and support offered by Public Health Services.

The pandemic will significantly affect the 2021 session. Issues still to be determined include the length of the session (still 90 days?); whether it will be in-person, virtual, or a combination; and whether there will be limits on the issues to be considered, the number of bills that can be filed, and on the timing for filing. The overriding issue will likely be how best to address the extremely serious fiscal consequences of the pandemic.

5) The Commission on Aging met on 10/22/2020

Rolando Santiago was appointed for the position of chief of Behavioral Health and Crisis Services at HHS. The County partnered with Leisure World as a testing site and provided over 400 tests. The ongoing nature of the test site is TBD. The public/ private partnership of Fairland Willow Manor opened providing 121 units for affordable senior care. The recreation department staff continues to work senior call centers, election site assistance and testing site assistance. Weekly meals are being distributed by the County Rec Center employees. If you wish to distribute information to go along with the meals, contact Sara.Swarr@montgomerycountymd.gov. The CoA Task Force on Racial Equity, Dementia Services and Police report is due out next month.

The Age Friendly Montgomery initiative received its official renewal status from the AARP and WHO.

Please check and promote the GROWS calendar for great educational and networking events.

The next GROWS Advocacy committee meeting will be November 24th at 1pm on ZOOM!