

GROWS Advocacy Committee report: 12/31/20

Topics:

1) Need to revise MoCo Faith Advisory introduction letter due to Rev. Kaseman's retirement. Letter has the objective of spreading awareness of GROWS to organizations that intersect in the Older Adult Service Provider & Caregiver space.

2) Life Span and Leading Age are Advocating for more funding for testing. See the Leading Age main page for the Action Alert <https://www.leadingagemaryland.org/>

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor and the Secretary of Health have issued orders requiring nursing homes and assisted living communities to test both their staff and their residents. Additional funding is essential to fund this effort and to continue to fight coronavirus in nursing homes and in assisted living communities.

WHAT TO DO: Reach out to legislators and the Governor to request additional funding to offset testing costs.

<https://governor.maryland.gov/contact-the-governor/> - This link is used to send correspondence to the Governor.

Subject is Health.

- The email should be address to "Dear Governor." (or "Dear Legislators" if sending to your legislators) Introduce yourself and let them know a few sentences about yourself and, if applicable, your organization. Where are you located? How many beds? For a family and or resident, let them know how long you have lived at the nursing home?

- **ASK** –

- a. The legislators to advocate for additional funding for nursing homes and assisted living communities to offset testing by contacting the Governor and the Secretary of Health.

- b. The Governor to provide additional monies for testing. The State cannot mandate this additional expense without additional funding.

3) The CoA Task Force to counter social isolation and loneliness in Montgomery County (SILoS) had its second meeting in December. Presentations were given by: Aditi Merchant, bigandmini.org / Marie Daly, Volunteer Helping Hands, Caring Matters / Sara Swarr, Moco Rec Dept, Covid Corps / Various committee members discussed what the Villages are doing to mitigate Social Isolation and Loneliness.

4) **CoA, Aging in Community:** met to discuss Montgomery County Home Sharing Program: 301-85-SHARE. Housing Initiative Partnership (HIP), a nonprofit housing developer and counseling agency, is launching a Home Sharing Program in Montgomery County, beginning in December 2020. The goal is to successfully identify and match renters who are seeking affordable housing options with homeowners who have attractive and safe spare bedrooms in their homes, or Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on their property, to rent long-term. The homeowners must live in the home full time to participate.

HIP's Montgomery County Home Sharing Program is supported by Montgomery County's Department of Health & Human Services, and uses Silvernest.com to match

Homeowners (HO) with compatible Home Seekers (HS). No housing subsidies are available.

<https://hiphomes.org/home-sharing/#faqs>

5) CoA, Health & Wellness had two speakers. Morris Klein, Esq. Elder Law Attorney, COA Commissioner and GROWS member discussed the costs of living for Aging in Place, nursing home care, assisted living and private home care. Options for paying are generally reverse mortgages, long term care insurance, Medicare and Medicaid. Montgomery County has some assisted living subsidies and VA has a \$2000 per month stay at home benefit. Medicaid has limited stay at home benefits and a 20,000 person waiting list. Rafael Espinoza spoke about the Montgomery County State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). This is a Medicare information system counseling program. They field about 150 calls per month and help people with Medicare decisions. The County provides Home and Community Based services through HHS: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/HomeCommBasedSvs.html>

6) CoA, Public Policy Committee: Held a Legislative Breakfast on ZOOM 12/10/20

Approximately 21 State Senators and Delegates were on the screens. The Commission on Aging presented its request for additional funding for 2 social workers for APS and Public Guardianship. And to request relief and support to prevent eviction of Older Adults. Morris Klein asked the attendees to support reducing the 20,000 person waiting list for home care through Medicaid and to increase funding for in home care and community services. Delegate Vaughn Stewart seemed to be most in tune with a senior agenda by saying he is continuing to support bills strengthening the foreclosure moratorium, extending landlord notice for non-renewal, limit long term care insurance hikes and for employers to re-hire older hospitality workers post pandemic. Senator Ben Kramer is working on a misapplied tax credit for older adults and working on a bill that Hogan vetoed last year on establishing the Senior and Vulnerable Adult Asset Recovery Unit in the Office of the Attorney General for the purpose of protecting seniors and vulnerable adults from financial crimes.

8) Chuck Kauffman drafted a letter/ press release last month to advocate on behalf of the senior population that the priority of vaccines should be to seniors. The County vaccination plan is at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/vaccine/> Phase 1C includes people aged 65-74 years and people aged 16-64 years with underlying medical conditions.

In December, Gloria revised the Advocacy web page to be more timeless. The monthly updates are added as links. There are links to useful documents and references.

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

The next GROWS Advocacy committee meeting will be January 26th 2021 at 1pm.