



AgingCT

Five Agencies, One Vision.

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Notes from the AgingCT Legislative Forum: A call to preserve services for older adults

Friday, April 25, 2026, 9:00-10:00 am

Welcome from Melissa Lang, Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut

We are here today to Educate and Advocate. AgingCT is our joint group of 5 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). The recent leaked budget documents are a vital concern to the services that we provide to support older adults in the region. We are the 6th oldest state and there are increasing needs of older adults. Aging is the fastest growing segment of our population. We need to think about what will happen when people do not have access to the support and services which impact people's health as they age. Research shows that community supports improve health and decrease healthcare costs. Providing care in the community is less expensive than in an institutional setting. This work helps to support improvements to the social determinants of health. We need to support caregivers in their care of older adults. It is very concerning to separate the actions of the Older Americans Act (OAA) into different agencies. Keeping the functions of the act together is integral to the safety network of aging services.

Introduction of Speakers from Maureen McIntyre, North Central Area Agency on Aging

Thank you for joining us on such quick notice!

Administration of Community Living dismantling was a significant harbinger of concern which is the potential division of the OAA functions between two other agencies which do not truly have concern about older adults and people with disabilities.

Representative Joe Courtney: There are a lot of "Five Alarm Fires" going on right now that are impacting life from the beginning of life to the end of life. This is concerning on many levels. You cannot overcommunicate at this point. It is not surprising to have such a significant turnout to an event like this. We have a group of federal legislators from CT that are completely in support of the Older Americans Act. What is happening currently is completely opposed to the intent of the Act. The committee submitted a resolution of inquiry to the Secretary's office regarding this to compel the evidence to this action. The creation of ACL was to make the delivery of services more efficient and effective. The depth and intensity of support in the community shows the importance. The leaked memo was essentially a wrecking ball. There is still time to revise how this works out in the budget. Budget reconciliation as proposed essentially "bombs" Medicaid. In his opinion, this will be modified. Rosa DeLauro will be key in



Appropriations Committee. When CT and the rest of the country really realize what is being proposed, they will stand up to this.

Caitlin Peruccio for Rosa DeLauro: Agree with Courtney. Appropriations process will begin the beginning of June. Likely that the current proposals will make it to the committee and this will give the Democrats the ability to make proposals. We continue laser focused on the current FY 25 budget as well. Caitlin.Peruccio@mail.house.gov

Erin McBride for Chris Murphy: Connecticut delegation is definitely in support of these programs and OAA. Recently worked on passing of legislation to combat loneliness in older adults. We are all here to help where we can. Continue to be nimble.

Erin_mcbride@murphy.senate.gov

Provided in chat: Information on the Senate Passage of Legislation to Combat Loneliness Amongst Older Adults from Dec. 2024: <https://www.murphy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/murphy-applauds-senate-passage-of-legislation-to-combat-loneliness-amongst-older-adults>

Alex Ginnis from Johanna Hayes: It is really important to bring back the stories of what impacts our residents. Thank you to the aging network for what you do. Essential to put a story to the programs so that we can see what and who would be impacted by the cuts.

Jane Garibay, Chair of Aging Committee in Connecticut: Gloom and doom and we don't know how this is going to hit us. What gives hope is our Federal delegation that we know support this work and our Area Agencies on Aging that are doing this work in our communities.

Matt Lesser, Co-chair of Health and Human Services Committee in Connecticut: Thank you to Courtney and other legislators for fighting on behalf of CT. Supporting staff items at AAA is in Appropriations now. The budget cycle is difficult in that the State is hoping to supplant some areas that might be impacted by the proposed cuts in the Federal budget. State may need to have special sessions over the summer to make revisions and recommendations. The impact of LIHEAP alone would be about 80 million dollars. CT cannot fill all of the gaps. Working on focus of prioritizing where the most significant needs are in our aging population in CT.

Commissioner Amy Porter: Thank you to AgingCT for pulling this program together today. There are over 268 zoom attendees on this call today and shows the strength of your connection with the community and the aging network. Difficult to not be paralyzed by fear.



Staying focused on providing the services that people need. Some optimism that we do have such a strong network in CT. We are here and we are listening and we appreciate the partnership.

Maureen McIntyre summary: Our role as Agencies on Aging is as a planning and funding agency And as a direct community service provider. Federal funds are most effective when delivered according to regional priorities and in conjunction with community providers.

Overview of Older Americans Act with Alison Dvorak, Senior Resources Eastern Connecticut Area Agency on Aging.

For more than 50 years the Older Americans Act has connected older adults and their caregivers to services that help older adults age with health, dignity and independence in their homes and communities. This vital federal program serves every community in the country. OAA programs provide local delivery of services and supports from meals to in-home help, transportation, home modification, legal services and much more. In addition to the huge benefit of supporting people where they want to live, services provided in the community are less expensive than institutional care. The OAA supports family caregivers and acknowledges the significant contribution they make to improving the lives of their loved ones, reducing healthcare costs and strengthening their community. Programs and services are designed to be provided locally, supporting the community in ways that meet the needs of the community. Eligibility is Everyone age 60 and over with focused concern on those most in need of support physically, financially or geographically so that they can age well at home. Since we are all aging, it is imperative to support aging. (Review infographic information)

Introduction of Client Stories from Spring Raymond, Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging

Sharon Girard Hoffman from Hebron regarding community funded services such as Transportation: OAA funds Transportation in Hebron which assists the 4500 seniors which live in this rural area. There are no other ways of getting transportation for seniors in this region for medical needs, banking, grocery, pharmacy, etc. Currently providing 2500 units of service per year which is door to door, reliable, efficient and effective. The service support caregivers in their workforce role as well.

David Morgan from TEAM in Naugatuck Valley regarding Senior Nutrition Program: I hope this is the beginning of a series of very powerful conversations. "If we don't shake the boat, there won't be a boat to stand on". Senior Nutrition Program just in TEAM service are notes 3 of



every 4 older adults are in isolation, 4 out of 10 are at risk of hospitalization, 1 out of every 5 is 90 years or older. Meals on Wheels meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and then also customizes them to the individuals needs. The program also provides social interactions which significantly impact and improve health. Look at the cost of Meals on Wheels and compare that to one day in a hospital or nursing home – nothing could be more cost efficient and effective. Need to realize the social impact on people with what is in the news. 3 of 4 people rely on LIHEAP so can you imagine their reaction to what they might hear on the news. (from chat notes a possible link to a video on SNP from TEAM)

Katie Wheeler from SWCAAA regarding the State Health Information Program: SHIP/CHOICES is eliminated in the current budget. We get calls from people that have questions about Medicare. It's really the first stop to get to other needs. Just last week we had a call from a person with a simple Medicare question and through conversation found that she had many other needs including transportation and food insecurity. She was eating nothing but rice and peanut butter. We were able to connect her to Meals on Wheels next week and order a peapod delivery to get her some groceries delivered to her home immediately.

Joan Marshall from Senior Resources (Eastern) regarding the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program offers funding for respite care to several categories of stressed caregivers. A consistent and predictable break from caregiving and some financial support is often the difference between being able to continue as a caregiver and having to pursue more costly inpatient care. The Care Manager assists with decision making regarding the specific care options that are the best fit for a particular family and also evaluates what other supports and services the individual can access.

A typical situation encountered by the NFCSP Care Manager is illustrated by Pearl. Pearl is a 91 year old woman living in Ledyard with her 93 year old husband. Pearl's neighbor had been assisting with her care and applied to NFCSP for some assistance. Our initial intervention was to provide Personal Care Service and transportation for Pearl to relieve the neighbor and enable Pearl to remain as independent as possible. As Pearl became more comfortable with our Care Manager, she began to request additional assistance with paperwork, the purchase of a rolling walker with supplemental funding, and finally with help for her husband whose health was deteriorating. Pearl and her husband agreed to apply to the CT Home Care Program, on the condition that the NFCSP CM be present for the lengthy assessment. They are now both receiving long term home care support through the Home Care Program for Elders. They



expressed deep gratitude for the National Family Caregiver Support Program, highlighting how it had enabled them to stay together in their own home, which was the highest priority for them. It is a fabulous program that provides invaluable support to hundreds of families every year, enabling people to remain in the community and preventing the high cost of inpatient care.

Steven Dwyer, WCAAA regarding Outreach Services:

The people that call the agency are scared and feel that their issues are emergencies. I am a Care Manager for the Western CT Area Agency on Aging's Caregiving Programs. I, like many of my colleagues, can often be the first point of contact, for a senior, disabled person or their family members. The people who call or visit the agency in person are overwhelmed, lost without direction, and sometimes scared, asking for our help while they are experiencing crisis. Many of the people we serve start with our Service Navigators who provide our community with guidance, vital information and case management which is not limited to food and housing insecurities. Navigators help older adults who are not versed in using phones or other technology by submitting applications and facilitating access to various services funded by state and federal agencies that provide legal aid, financial assistance, employment support and protective services among other things. Service Navigators work directly with other departments at our Agency on Aging. CHOICES or CT's Health Insurance Assistance Program which provides seniors much needed guidance on Medicare works closely with our office's Federal Senior Medicare Patrol, which empowers those on Medicare to fight medical bills that are fraudulently given to our seniors and educates our seniors and their loved ones on how to protect themselves from scams, and fraud. Our communities rely heavily on Federally funded programs that provide Housing services to our elderly like Congregate housing, which provides places for seniors to live independently in a safe community, and benefit from Health and Wellness Programs, which provide evidence based workshops, to help our seniors manage their chronic pains, educate diabetic diets, and provide age appropriate exercises to help seniors build or maintain strength. I spend a lot of time in the field, often meeting seniors or disabled individuals that my colleagues have also worked with, as I'm completing initial assessments in people's homes, as I've mentioned, for our Caregiver Programs, confirming eligibility and creating care plans to facilitate non-medical care. What I have discovered in this position, is that the needs of our community outweigh the available resources.

My assessments are with Caregiver's who are often the sole providers of care to their loved one, and I frequently find are Elderly themselves. Caregivers who are afraid to leave the home, who have been neglecting their common place needs, because their loved one is not safe if left



alone. A common need that Caregivers' neglect that comes up the most is when they tell me, "Steve, I haven't had time to schedule my own doctor's appointment".

To be eligible for the programs I administer, guidelines state that an adult must be caring for a person who must have Alzheimer's disease or irreversible dementia, or be at risk of institutional placement. Meaning, the individual cannot complete at least two what is called, "activities of daily living" without assistance. My clients, the seniors that I serve in the community, cannot bathe themselves, dress themselves, prepare meals and in some instances lack the ability to feed themselves as they are unable to move a fork or a spoon from a plate to their mouth. If you were to ask me, I would say nearly all my clients receiving care cannot walk without assistance, with many of them struggling to get on and off the toilet, many of them having to wear incontinence products, because they are soiling themselves. Imagine caring for or being someone with all these limitations. Now imagine all of this is paired with a cognitive diagnosis such as dementia. Meaning that it is not only difficult or impossible to do these things, but now the person doesn't understand why they are unable to do these things. I want to be clear; this is not a rarity for the people I work with in the community, it describes nearly all my clients. My program and all programs at the "Triple A's", provide people with support, when there is none. Of my clients who are still cognitive, meaning they understand their limitations, and why they are needing support, they often tell me, "To not get old", this is an unrealistic expectation to put upon anyone. If our government is to re-organize or cut programs focused on supporting older adults, I ask what is the solution to aging?

Wrap up with Marie Allen, South Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging

We are the safety net. OAA gives us the pieces of string that give all of us as partners in the aging network to make this net. We do more with less. We are under an incredible threat to the independence, dignity and support that is needed by our older adults. We are all busy but now is the most important time to give our state and federal leaders the information and stories that they need to support the funding for these programs.

We lose the humanity that is the United States.

Three major concerns

1. Delay in funding due to the dismantling of the ACL.
2. The uncoupling of Nutrition from Community Services. We lose continuum of care.
3. CHOICES is a necessary support for older adults to understand and utilize Medicare in the way that is best for them to save money on medication or the most effective supports for their care.

Please send in stories to hello@agingct.org

We are going to get through this together!