



**Testimony of Deputy Secretary David Gingerich, Department of Aging
Senate Aging and Youth and House Aging and Older Adult Services
Informational Hearing - Update on Aging Related Issues
University of Pittsburgh
August 28, 2014**

Good morning, Chairman Vulakovich, Chairman Wiley, Chairman Hennessey, Chairman Samuelson, and members of the Senate Aging and Youth Committee and House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee. I am Deputy Secretary of Aging David Gingerich and I appreciate the opportunity to update you on the activities at the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (Department) that address the needs of our older Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvania is home to a diverse and aging population. In fact, the US Census Bureau has estimated that nearly 2.8 million Pennsylvanian residents are now over the age of 60. The Penn State Data Center has estimated that by as early as next year, nearly 1 in 4 Pennsylvanians will be age 60 or older. As a result, the need for services to care for the aging population continues to increase.

The Department's mission is to enhance the quality of life for all older Pennsylvanians through empowering diverse communities, families, and individuals. This has been the mission for over thirty-five years and Governor Corbett's Administration has remained committed to support the Department's mission and older Pennsylvanians. At the Department's foundation are prevention and protection. The Department works to prevent instability in health and well-being for older Pennsylvanians that, if left unaddressed, could result in those individuals having to receive institutional care and becoming more dependent on government aid. In addition, a core function of the Department is to help protect older Pennsylvanians from abuse, neglect, abandonment, and exploitation.

To help carry out our mission, the Department created the 2012-2016 State Plan on Aging. The four goals of the state plan are:

- Improve access to care for older individuals at the right time, in the right setting, and at the right intensity;
- Empower older individuals to remain in the setting of their choice by serving as catalysts in developing communities as places in which to age and live well;
- Direct older individuals to the supports necessary to maximize their health and well-being; and
- Revitalize and design the aging services network to further enhance the lives of older individuals.

Last year, Pennsylvania's aging services network reached a milestone when it touched the lives of over 1,000,000 individuals. Critical partners of the aging services network are the 52 Area Agencies on Aging, (AAA's) which serve as the local resource for information on programs and services but also direct services to support older adults in their homes and communities. The network also includes a robust provider and volunteer component which help to enhance the quality of life for older Pennsylvanians. The aging network also provides protective services to ensure that our older citizens are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and abandonment. To report any suspected abuse call the 24-7 Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-800-490-8505.

Highlights of Governor Corbett's commitment to older Pennsylvanians can be seen by the fact that through his leadership, and the support of the General Assembly, additional funding was included in the FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15 budgets for programs that benefit older Pennsylvanians. These unprecedented investments enable older Pennsylvanians to remain living in their homes and communities and have access to long-term care services. This comes at a time when there is more demand for services, such as in-home personal care and home-delivered meals, due to the rising number of older adults in the commonwealth.

This past year, we have been able to remove over 6,900 individuals from the Options home services waiting list for services. In addition, we have been able to increase services to approximately 7,000 individuals. Home and community based services include home health care, personal care providing assistance with bathing, dressing, eating, grooming, toileting, etc. It also could include services such as home-delivered meals, housekeeping, shopping assistance, laundry, caregiver relief, transportation and other basic services necessary to maintain a consumer's health, safety and ability to remain in their home. It's important to note that we can provide these home and community based services at a substantially lower cost than institutional care such as a nursing home. The FY 2014-15 budget continues and expands upon this historic investment in Pennsylvania's older citizens.

The budget includes \$2 million dollars for our senior centers through a competitive grant process. This follows the awarding of 36 grants to senior centers in FY 2013-14 totaling \$2 million dollars. The Department has partnered with Temple University to evaluate best practices which can be replicated by other senior community centers. The grants for FY 2014-15 will again provide an opportunity for our 551 senior centers to enter into a competitive grant process to receive funding to modernize their facilities, develop a more diverse membership, expand and increase quality programs, and encourage sustainable and innovative programs and services. This will allow the centers to prepare for changing demographics and make them attractive to a younger aging group, thereby expanding services to more individuals. I would encourage any interested senior center to apply for the funding. The application deadline is September 8th.

Now in the 30th year, the PACE and PACENET programs are Pennsylvania's prescription assistance programs for older adults that offer low-cost prescription medication to qualified residents age 65 and older. Through the leadership and support of the Governor, his administration, and you, over 29,000 older Pennsylvanians have been protected from losing prescription drug coverage. In February 2014, the Governor signed HB 777, sponsored by Representative Seth Grove, now known as Act 12 of 2014, which will allow individuals enrolled in PACE or PACENET as of December 31, 2013, to remain eligible if their maximum income

limit is exceeded due solely to a Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. In addition, the bill removes Medicare Part B premium payments from the definition of "income" thereby providing nearly 8,200 additional Pennsylvanians with prescription drug coverage. I thank you for your vote to provide these valuable benefits to our PACE participants.

The APPRISE program experienced its most successful year in its history in 2013. The APPRISE program provides assistance to Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers and families through a network of volunteers and staff at Area Agencies on Aging throughout Pennsylvania. The program made 181,247 client contacts in 2013, surpassing the 100,000 client contact milestone. It should be noted Pennsylvania's APPRISE program is one of the most robust in the nation. APPRISE counselors provided free in-person or telephone assistance to help older adults understand Medicare and Medicaid eligibility and benefits, Medicare supplemental insurance, HMOs, and long-term care insurance.

One of the Department's major initiatives is our work surrounding the State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorder's (ADRD). Governor Corbett announced the creation of the Pennsylvania Alzheimer's Disease Planning Committee ("Committee") in February 2013, via an Executive Order. Over the past year, the Committee heard comments from over 100 Pennsylvanians at six regional meetings and five working meetings who testified on the impact of ADRD in Pennsylvania.. In addition, over 330 Pennsylvanians submitted their thoughts via an on-line survey and correspondence.

The Committee was charged with developing a comprehensive state plan of action to address the growing crisis of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. In addition, the plan will play a significant role in raising public awareness around this growing crisis and how we, as a Commonwealth, should address the multitude of issues raised, and the many challenges it creates for those living with the disease, their families and their communities.

The plan reflects a consensus from the Committee on how to respond effectively to the disease, with seven recommendations, including:

- Improve awareness, knowledge and sense of urgency about medical, social and financial implications of ADRD across the commonwealth;
- Due to the magnitude of the ADRD epidemic, identify financial resources where possible to implement this plan through federal, state, foundation, private and other innovative funding mechanisms and partnerships;
- Promote brain health and cognitive fitness across the life cycle from birth onward;
- Provide a comprehensive continuum of ethical care and support that responds to social and cultural diversity, with services and supports ranging from early detection and diagnosis through end-of-life care;
- Enhance support for family and non-professional caregivers and those living with ADRD;
- Build and retain a competent, knowledgeable, ethical and caring workforce; and
- Promote and support novel and ongoing research to find better and effective cures, treatments and prevention strategies for ADRD.

The Department, through the work of the Committee, has developed enhanced relationships with academia, other government agencies, policymakers, care providers, persons living with the disease, and advocates that will assist in developing innovative strategies to prevent and combat the devastating effects of ADRD.

Governor Corbett has accepted the plan and has called upon the Department to implement the recommendations.

I want to thank Chairmen Hennessey, Samuelsson and Vulakovich for your participation in the Committee and your continued support of the State Plan for ADRD.

During September, members of the Committee will join with key stakeholders to identify action steps to carry out the recommendations, goals and strategies of the plan.

In addition to the work of the ADRD Committee, the Department continues to help Pennsylvanians living with ADRD. Since 1985, the Department has supported Alzheimer's disease outreach. In this current fiscal year, through work of Pennsylvania's two Alzheimer's Association chapters supported by the Department, we have provided training, education and outreach to families, medical professionals, human service providers and underserved, minority and culturally-diverse communities.

As you know, Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation to use Lottery funding solely for services to support its older residents. Because of this unique source of dedicated funding, over 78% of the Department's budget is derived from the Lottery Fund with the remaining portions coming from federal sources. In order to provide funding for the increased demand for services, we encourage the Senate to pass HB 2110 which is before you for a third and final vote. This bill will provide the Pennsylvania Lottery with the tools needed to ensure increased profitability for the future. Failure to pass this bill will result in less money for aging related programs, at a time when the demand for these services is growing.

What I have highlighted represents just a few of the commitments to older Pennsylvanians that Governor Corbett and the Department have fulfilled. I would like to discuss *Raising Expectations 2014: A State Scorecard on Long-Term Services and Supports for Older Adults, People with Physical Disabilities, and Family Caregivers*, a recent report released by AARP. The Department shares the author's call to identify data to improve long-term services and supports. The report shows areas that continue to need improvement within the long-term services and supports system. However, the report does not provide a full picture of the actions taken by Governor Corbett to enhance long-term services and supports in Pennsylvania. This report provides an overview of long-term services and supports and ranks states according to five key dimensions and 26 indicators. Pennsylvania improved within 12 indicators. While a comparison of overall ranking is not indicative of the state of long-term services and supports in Pennsylvania, when you look at the individual indicators, Pennsylvania tied with one other state to show significant improvement in more indicators than any other states.

To recap, Governor Corbett continues to show his commitment to older Pennsylvanians and those with disabilities through a number of initiatives he has instituted that focus on improving quality of life:

- Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Commission, a Healthy Pennsylvania initiative, is charged with presenting recommendations to the Governor by December 31st 2014, that will ensure the state's long-term care services and support delivery system will be person-centered, efficient, effective and fiscally responsible.
- The 13-14 budget enabled older Pennsylvanians to remain in their homes and communities and have access to long-term care service by removing over 6,900 older Pennsylvanians from the Options waiting list for home support and services. The 14-15 budget continues this commitment.
- The Pennsylvania Caregiver Support Act modernized the state Family Caregiver Support Program which helps to relieve the burden on over 7,000 caregivers annually.
- The Care Transition Program has led to a significant reduction in hospital readmissions. In 2013, half of the AAAs partnered with hospitals and health systems to carry out care transition programs.
- Act 12 of 2014 will allow individuals enrolled in PACE or PACENET as of December 31, 2013, to remain eligible if their maximum income limit is exceeded due solely to a Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. In addition, the bill removes Medicare Part B premium payments from the definition of "income" thereby providing nearly 8,200 additional Pennsylvanians with prescription drug coverage.
- The State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders has been accepted by Governor Corbett and is moving forward.
- Grants awarded to senior community centers will help define best practices.

Through the initiatives and accomplishments listed above, as well as other ongoing endeavors, Governor Corbett and the Department continue to help older Pennsylvanians to age and live well and improve long-term services and supports. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with you today.