



Acting Secretary of Aging  
Teresa Osborne

Senate Aging and Youth Committee  
Confirmation Meeting  
May 12, 2015

Good morning Chairwoman Brooks, Chairman Haywood and Members of the Senate Aging and Youth Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you as I present myself for your consideration to serve as the Secretary of Aging for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

As Governor Wolf's nominee to serve in this position of public trust, I understand and am willing to accept the responsibilities and expectations associated with serving as the leader of the state unit on aging. With nearly 2.7 million individuals over the age of 60, Pennsylvania currently has the fourth highest percentage of residents age 60 and over, trailing only Florida, West Virginia and Maine. Pennsylvania is also among the states with a large percentage of population age 85 and older; and by 2020, more than one in four Pennsylvanians will be age 60 and older. These demographic features underscore the reality that there will be an increase in the need and demand for fiscal, health and social supports to ensure a sound quality of life for older Pennsylvanians. These features also accentuate the reality that our aging population will challenge the social safety net, anchored by federal programs, such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, while simultaneously increasing the demand for home and community based services, like those offered through our network of local Area Agencies on Aging.

As the state unit on aging, our main goal is to provide opportunities for keeping older persons in their own home and communities. As Secretary, I will continue to develop and administer the state plan, while upholding the requirements and underpinnings of the Older Americans Act: to help vulnerable older adults live with independence and dignity in their own homes and communities. I will serve as a proactive, effective and visible advocate for older Pennsylvanians, with a particular emphasis on informing and educating others about the silent tragedy of elder abuse, neglect, abandonment and financial exploitation, including guardianship abuses.

I have been blessed with a career journey that has consistently afforded me with opportunities to meet, listen to and learn from older adults and individuals with disabilities. As a result, for over twenty years I have been privileged to secure gainful employment as a caseworker, aging care manager, protective service investigator, executive director, chief operating officer, administrator, and most recently an acting secretary. While each post has been a stepping stone, most importantly, each post has provided incredible opportunities to serve and to advocate for the benefits and rights of the frail, the marginalized and the most vulnerable among us.

During my time as Acting Secretary of Aging, I have enjoyed meeting with you in order to discuss my background and qualifications. Moreover, I have appreciated your questions, along with your concerns for the senior constituents you represent. Many of you have also expressed the need for the Department of Aging to continue to carefully review and consider implementing the recommendations contained in several important reports, including the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders State Plan, the Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Commission Report, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Elder Law Task Force Report and the Joint State Government Commission Report on Long-Term Care Services and Supports for Older Pennsylvanians. Respecting and realizing that much energy and effort went into each body of work, I am committed to work with the Department staff and my counterparts in the Wolf Administration to continue to carefully review the recommendations contained in each as discussion, discernment and decision making processes move forward.

With the only U.S. Lottery that dedicates all of its proceeds for the benefit of its senior population, I am grateful for and am committed to ensuring that the dollars entrusted to our care are used well and wisely. With nearly 77 percent of the Department's funding coming from the Pennsylvania Lottery Fund, in a challenging fiscal environment we will continue to work closely with the network of local Area Agencies on Aging to strategically plan and prioritize so that the care options upon which our constituents depend for protection of health, welfare and safety are minimally impacted. To this end, I pledge that the Department will adhere to fiscal practices that are characterized by responsibility, transparency and accountability, while basing decisions on data analysis, outcomes and continuous quality improvement.

If confirmed as Secretary, I look forward to working with the General Assembly, our sister agencies, in particular the Departments of Human Services, Insurance and Health, and the Aging Network to coordinate and successfully operate a complex service delivery system that provides access to long-term care services and supports and elder rights protections and programs. Thank you for your willingness to consider my credentials to serve in this capacity. I am prepared to respond to any questions that you may have of me.