

Testimony of

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Aging

Before the

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Of the

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Chairwoman Mundy, Chairman Hennessey, and distinguished members of the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee, I am Nora Dowd Eisenhower, Secretary of Aging, and I am honored to appear before you to discuss the importance of creating civic engagement opportunities for older adults in Pennsylvania.

As you may know, we are in the process of creating a new State Plan on Aging for 2008-2012. The State Plan provides us with a blueprint for our programs and services over the next four years, and civic engagement constitutes a key focus area that we would like to see represented in the Plan.

In order to begin thinking about the State Plan and opportunities for civic engagement, we need to know what the population we serve will look like over the next few years and how changing demographics in Pennsylvania will alter the makeup of this group. Around the globe, much of the growth in aging populations is happening and will continue to happen in developed countries. By 2030, all developing countries will have a larger percentage of their population over the age of 65 than under the age of 15. While developing nations such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq will experience youth bulges, the industrialized world will face an unprecedented challenge related to the aging population.

In the United States, by the year 2030 the number of Americans over 65 will more than double to 71 million, or 20% of the U.S. population. In some states one fourth of the population will be over 65. By 2020, the Pennsylvania population over 65 will be one third larger than it is today (3.3 versus 2.5 million) with a significant increase in the 60-80 year-old group. Pennsylvania will also experience a decrease in younger groups such that, by the year 2020, for the first time in history the percent of Pennsylvania population under age 15 will equal the percent of population over age 65.

In response to an Executive Order from Governor Rendell, the Department of Aging (PDA) launched the PA 2020 Vision project to develop an overarching plan to help ensure that the needs of Pennsylvania citizens of all ages are met from 2006 to the year 2020.

Using the Lifestage Analytic Matrix marketing concept of cohort analysis and shared defining moments, PDA worked with other state agencies to create a response plan for the year 2020. According to the cohort concept, each individual belongs to a particular group or "cohort." Cohorts are created by shared defining moments (i.e. the Great Depression). Members of a cohort tend to share similar values and mindsets. Therefore, the seniors of today have a different mindset and value structure from the Boomers who are just beginning to age into our systems.

Our 2020 Vision Project findings will inform our current State Plan process. We need to keep in mind that older adults today are not the same as older adults will be in 5 or 10 years. They have different values and mindsets which will impact their needs and desires and how we respond to them. Given these demographic shifts, it is crucial that we revise our State Plan every 4 years to meet the diverse needs of our changing population.

The new plan will cover 2008-2012 and will be structured somewhat differently than the previous plan, focusing on 4 broad goals rather than the 10 areas we highlighted in 2004. The 2004-2008 State Plan established 10 priority areas, one of which was Civic Engagement & Volunteerism. We truly made an effort to address all 10 priority areas over the last four years, and I would like to highlight some of our accomplishments in the area of civic engagement.

Senior Centers

Through a statewide survey of senior centers conducted in FY 2005-2006, the Department has established a baseline that about 24,000 of roughly 2.4 million older Pennsylvanians (1%) participate in senior community center activities. Using proxy measures, such as the social and recreational events held by AAAs, it can be estimated that Senior Center participation increased by about five percent from State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2003-04 to 2004-05. Senior Center programming is fairly consistent across the state. On average, 93% of senior centers offer programs that are evenly distributed among:

- Nutrition Education
- Health Screenings
- Fitness & Wellness programs
- Health Education

Health and Wellness

The number of outreach initiatives and educational sessions in the general area of health and wellness has increased by 15% thus far during the planning period. Participation in these sessions has increased by 8% during this period. All 52 AAAs have maintained community partnerships in this program area. AAAs offered eight major types of health and wellness events during implementation of the State Plan. Of eight "Primetime Health" priority areas, 5 have experienced an increase in events. Sharp drops in categories such as incontinence reflect local priorities as expressed by staff, consumers, and participants.

In addition, a major focus was placed on reducing the risk of falls through the statewide expansion of the "Healthy Steps" program. Based on the success of our Healthy Steps program, we conservatively project that the commonwealth will avoid \$21 million in costs due to falls-related injuries and hospitalizations.

APPRISE Counseling Program

Our APPRISE counseling program continues to provide an important service to older adults. Progress was made in the area of access to needed prescription drugs through enhancement of the PACE/PACENET program, resulting in increased participation. In addition, the Department, through its APPRISE program, helped older Pennsylvanians negotiate the conversion to Medicare Part D through the establishment of informational hot lines during the Part D implementation period. In FY 2006-07, the APPRISE program served 231,000 people, an increase of over 100% from FY 2003-2004. APPRISE currently has 945 volunteers, up from 289 in FY 2003-2004.

Ombudsman PEER Program

The Ombudsman Pennsylvania Empowered Expert Residents (PEER) program has been identified as a best practice example. From FY 2004-2005 to FY 2005-2006, there was an increase in participating AAAs from seven to twelve, or an increase of 71%. In addition, there has been steady growth in the number of Ombudsman PEER graduates, from 37 in FY 02-03 to 379 in FY 06-07.

While I am very proud of our accomplishments in the area of civic engagement over the past four years, there is certainly much more that remains to be done to ensure that older adults in Pennsylvania have myriad opportunities to remain engaged and involved in vibrant intergenerational communities. Senator Wofford's commitment to civic engagement and, more specifically, to Experience Wave, is commendable. As the Baby Boomers approach retirement in increasing numbers, we have a wonderful opportunity to harness their energy, experience and know-how to sustain the ways in which they contribute to and benefit from their communities.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before you today. I would be happy to take any questions you may have at this time.