

Active Aging, Inc.

Crawford County's Area Agency on Aging

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Good morning Chairman Hennessey, Chairman Samuelson, Chairwoman Brooks, Chairman Haywood and other distinguished members of the committees. My name is Krista Geer, I am the Executive Director for Active Aging, Inc. the Area Agency on Aging for Crawford County. I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the senior citizens of Crawford County who have been negatively affected by the current enrollment process under the Independent Enrollment Broker, Maximus.

The first part of my testimony today is going to be made up primarily of numbers. Before I dive headfirst into these numbers, I want you to consider that they are only numbers from Crawford County, but make no mistake about it, every county in the Commonwealth is experiencing the same problems. We are a mid-sized county as far as Waiver is concerned, having around 220 consumers before April. We now have 180. I want to start with the number of referrals our agency has made to Maximus since they began handling the enrollment function: 62. Next is the number of consumers who have been approved for waiver services by Maximus since April 1st: 7. In 6 months, 7 people have been enrolled. In the same 6 month time frame of last year, Active Aging successfully enrolled 22 people. Sadly, those numbers are just the beginning. I have others. For example, 3. This is the number of people who decided it was easier to remain in a nursing home than continue to try to work with Maximus. Or 4, the number of people who went to a nursing home because they could not wait any longer to receive the care they need to survive. The number 14 is the number of senior citizens in Crawford County who have given up. They no longer want to enroll in waiver services because they don't believe they will ever be approved. The next number I have for you today is the saddest of all, the number 5. This is the number of people who died waiting for help that never came.

I have one final number for you: \$9,006.76. That is what it has cost Active Aging, Inc. in staff time alone from July 1 through October 1 to provide enrollment assistance to our senior citizens. \$9,006.76 that will be paid to another entity for work we performed.

While I believe those numbers are very significant and impactful, neither you nor I are in the position of representing numbers, we represent people. Numbers are neat and tidy and fit very well on a spreadsheet, but they do not adequately represent the people I am here to talk to you about. They do not give you the full idea of the depth or breadth of this particular problem. This particular problem affects people. People who are facing a crisis. The daily

activities they have always done independently are simply impossible for them to continue doing. They cannot bathe themselves, they cannot go to the bathroom on their own and they cannot cook their own meals.

The second part of my testimony is to give you a glimpse of these numbers in a way that ensures that we never forget that they are only representations of actual people.

Let me introduce you to Gene. Gene is 82 years old. As you can tell by his hat, he is a veteran of the Korean War. Gene is afflicted with a very progressive and aggressive form of arthritis that affects his spine. This was initially discovered 2 years ago when he fell, breaking his back and neck. In the 2 years since this fall, Gene's abilities have deteriorated significantly and he can barely walk, or get out of his chair on his own. So much so that his 87 year old neighbor took it upon herself to help Gene after she discovered that he had no family and no way of helping himself. In March of this year she reached out to Active Aging to ask for assistance as she was no longer able to assist Gene due to her own health concerns. April 1st, we had to turn over Gene's case to Maximus to complete the enrollment process.

Between April and June we waited patiently to see how this process would function with Maximus at the helm. By July 1st we knew that it simply was not functioning at all, not one single person had been enrolled in our county. And frankly, I had had enough. I was done sitting back waiting for Maximus to do their job, so we began to do it for them. In July our staff began contacting every consumer we had referred to Maximus to determine what help we could offer them. Which brings me back to Gene.

You may remember that Gene was referred to Maximus on April 1st when they took over the enrollment function. When we called Gene the first week of July, he had never even heard from them. Not a call, not a letter. We called Maximus, we worked with Gene to get his PA 600 completed and we sent it all to Maximus on July 19th. Maximus finally made it to see Gene on August 18th. His services finally began the first week of October. Six months to get the care he needs to be able to do the things we can do for ourselves without giving it another thought.

Now I would like to introduce you to George. George is a 68 year old man who has endured several heart attacks, has COPD, 3 stents in his heart and is on oxygen 24/7. Do you notice the recliner that he is sitting in? That recliner is everything to George, it is where he sleeps, where he eats, and where he spends almost all of his time. George's bathroom is on the 2nd floor of his house, he can't climb the stairs anymore, so he has a urinal and potty chair in his living room, right next to his recliner. Active Aging first received a call about George May 2nd. We had our nurse assess George in his home on May 5th and sent the assessment and referral to Maximus on May 9th. On June 16th we received a request from Maximus to complete the assessment. We sent the assessment that was completed on May 5th and sent on May 9th again. On June 23rd we were contacted by George's daughter who had talked to Maximus and was told they did not have the assessment. We sent it to them for the 3rd time that same day and called to follow up. We were told by Maximus staff that George had 2

open cases and that they would combine the two and call George to schedule a visit. We called Maximus again on July 21st to inquire on George's status. Maximus staff indicated that everything had been submitted to the CAO. We called the CAO & they did not have any documents from Maximus. We called Maximus back to ask for the documents to be sent again. George's approval came from Maximus on September 8th. George's trek through the system took 4 months. And while it is different from what Gene experienced, it shows you another challenge to this current process. Approximately 40% of the documents sent from our agency to Maximus are reportedly never received. This is not a problem we experience with any other agency we work with.

I don't know the medical history of everyone in this room. However, I am guessing that none of us are currently experiencing the type of health problems that Gene or George are. We don't currently require assistance to get out of bed, to get dressed, or to go to the bathroom. But some day we might. Take just a minute to imagine what that must be like. Imagine waking in the morning & not knowing if you can even get out of your own bed and walk to the bathroom. Imagine wanting a shower, but being unable to get into it. Imagine sitting in a house all alone, no family to call, no means to help yourself and wondering if those that are being paid to get you the care you need ever will. I hope and pray that none of you ever have to suffer that kind of indignity.

My final comments are meant to dispel several myths that have been perpetuated since this process began. Some will have you believe that the Area Agencies on Aging across the Commonwealth are upset with losing our place in the enrollment process. That is categorically false. Not one AAA fought to maintain this function. Let me repeat that, not one. We did suggest that the rollout should be moved back to a later date, but that is all. Some will have you believe that the Area Agencies on Aging are "clogging" the phone lines to Maximus. That is categorically false. We make phone calls when necessary to determine what is needed to assist those who need our help and recent reports provided did not show one AAA in the top 10 of the phone call volume. Some will have you believe that the Area Agencies on Aging did not make anyone aware of the level of assistance that is needed to enroll someone over the age of 60 in the waiver program. That is also categorically false. We very clearly shared that many of our seniors do not have access to computers or the funds to pay for internet service when it was asserted that they could enroll electronically. We very clearly shared that many of our seniors lack the family support to gather the records needed for financial determination and we very clearly shared that our seniors come to us for help during what is typically a health crisis. Sharing only matters if someone is listening. Some will have you believe that the Area Agencies on Aging always complain when something changes. Always is a pretty strong word, but I can tell you that I will always complain when those I am charged with serving are not getting the care they need. I will always say something when our seniors are suffering, and I will always advocate for change that will end that suffering. Always.

In closing, I hope you understand that my message and my delivery come from both my passion and compassion for those I represent today, the Gene's and the George's across our

Commonwealth. Please know that I will gladly offer that same passion and compassion to the act of resolving these problems as I have in pointing them out. I am willing, ready and able to step up, roll up my sleeves and put forth the effort to be part of the solution.