



**COMMONWEALTH OF
PENNSYLVANIA AGING**

Adult Day Informational Hearing
House Aging and Older Services Committee
Testimony of Jason Kavulich, Secretary of Aging
March 18, 2024

Good morning, Chairwoman Kim, Chairman Mentzer and members of the Committee.

I appreciate being able to join you here today with partners from the Department of Human Services' Office of Long-Term Living and the Adult Day Services Community.

I look forward to a conversation today focused on solutions. To me, Adult Day Services is a solution for many older Pennsylvanians and their families, yet it is not widely known or talked about in many parts of Pennsylvania. To develop the Aging Our Way, PA 10-year plan for older adults, the Department of Aging engaged with communities in every corner of the state through over 200 listening sessions, a survey completed by thousands of individuals and caregivers, and via thousands of other comments, remarks, and submissions. We heard that we need to do a better job in getting information into the hands of older adults, families, caregivers and providers so services and supports can more easily be identified and connected to someone in need.

Navigation, accessibility and connectivity to resources featured heavily in what Pennsylvanians told us we need to provide them so older adults can remain independent and healthy in the age friendly environment of their choosing. It should be no surprise that Adult Day Services, among many other services and supports, were not mentioned in the responses from throughout the state because our constituents and communities told us very clearly, they don't widely know what is out there and available to them.

As we finish our second round of comments for Aging Our Way PA, I am grateful we have an opportunity to be here today to discuss a solution that has been easily overlooked. A solution that brings stability, comfort, respite, and support to the lives of thousands of older adults, their families, and caregivers and most importantly keeps older adults living in their homes and communities. Adult Day Services is such a solution.

The Department of Aging's role is to license the 230 Older Adult Daily Living Centers operating in the Commonwealth. Last year, eight centers closed, and 11 new centers opened. As a direct result of the Governor's Permit and Licensing Executive Order, the Department has updated the new provider license application process. Each application form is now provided in a fillable Microsoft Word format available on the Department's website. This format improves the accuracy and consistency of the information received from new providers and streamlines the application process, allowing providers to open faster.

When you reflect on this model you can see why Adult Day is a critical component to any service array in a community. Activities like physical and speech therapy, nutrition, grooming, provide essential services to attendees while they enjoy socialization with each other and the trained and dedicated staff. Combatting social isolation, Alzheimer's and other dementias is found at the core of the mission of these centers whose programs cater to the special needs of this population. The flexibility and welcoming nature of these environments provide for the unique needs of all the attendees but in a communal setting that is comfortable and stable.

There is another very important factor we cannot ignore. This model is highly cost efficient while providing some of the best care an older adult can receive. This model is affordable for public providers, individuals, and private payors. This service gives us an amazing benefit in an affordable, safe, and reliable manner. Simply put, we can provide high-end care to older adults in this setting more efficiently and consistently than with any other model.

We can expound on all the benefits this model has to offer, yet there are still challenges we must work together on to make those benefits known to older adults and their caregivers. Aging Our Way PA provides us with a collective platform to work together with the Area Agencies on Aging, Adult Day Providers, the Office of Long-Term Living, members of the legislature and their communities. We must do better connecting older adults to this service and attracting them with new and innovative programing that they and caregivers need and have told us they want.

We are faced with challenges and opportunities. We are challenged to reconnect the 52 Area Agencies on Aging and Adult Day services providers to combat waiting lists, we are challenged to innovate and program for the needs of older adults and their caregivers, we are challenged to sustain the resources that connect communities to this service, we are challenged to find better ways to navigate those in need to this and other services, and we are challenged through over 20,000 responses this year to do better for older Pennsylvanians.

Aging Our Way PA provides us with the opportunity to work collaboratively, to find a new way to reach those who need us and help them navigate services and supports. It will also allow us to find information and resources to improve, update, and enhance programs like Adult Day to serve more older adults and their caregivers; to lower waiting lists for services and in many ways deliver a better service; and to work together on reinventing becoming an older adult in Pennsylvania.

Like today's proceeding, Aging Our Way, PA highlights the work we must do together. Adult Day Services are not just a service you can access in a community. They are a solution, an opportunity, and resource for us to meet the challenges of social isolation, caregiver fatigue, the struggles of the direct care work force shortage, and of providing the care individuals living with Alzheimer's and dementia need.

Thank you for allowing me to be here with all of you to raise awareness of these incredible programs and to work together in better serving older Pennsylvanians each day.