



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

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**Aging advocates and Governor share goals,
Diverge on funding**

“Save Senior Services” Statehouse meetings April 5-6

Columbus, OH – Advocates for the aging laud Gov. John Kasich’s plan to increase by 15 percent the number of elderly and disabled persons who will receive home care, but contend that his administration underestimates the funds needed to achieve that objective.

“We share the goal to keep more older and disabled Ohioans in their homes for as long as possible to slow the growth of Medicaid spending and provide consumers with an array of choices,” said Larke Recchie, executive director of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

“But at the same time, the budget cuts senior services by 23 percent over two years, reduces staff who connect people to home and community care by 15 percent, and decreases payments to service providers by 3 percent. The math doesn’t work. You can’t serve more people with less money,” Recchie said.

“Area Agencies on Aging have 30 years’ experience making this system work, and we believe the administration underestimates what’s needed to serve more people at home and in the community,” she said. “The Kasich Administration and aging advocates see the same target, but their aim is off.”

About 36,000 older and disabled Ohioans currently are enrolled in Medicaid-funded programs, including PASSPORT and Assisted Living, administered by Area Agencies on Aging. PASSPORT is already the lowest cost of any long-term care options. Recchie noted that there is no “play” in an individual’s care plan costs.

“Area Agencies on Aging are local, not-for-profit organizations that operate on very lean margins. We aren’t large public-sector bureaucracies. The new administration hopes to save public-sector costs through pension reform and health-care program changes. Unfortunately, these savings don’t benefit the not-for-profit network of Area Agencies on Aging,” Recchie said.

The aging association has calculated that cuts in staff positions for care managers and assessors may result in a waiting list that could grow to more than 11,000 people trying to get into programs. Many who might have been able to remain at home will turn to more expensive nursing homes to get the care they need.

Said Recchie: “The services we provide are basic, but essential. What do we take away? Bathing? Medication? Transportation to the doctor? At what point are the supports so diminished that the frail elderly have no option but to move into a nursing home that costs taxpayers three times the cost of keeping people in their homes?”

Area Agencies on Aging will share this message with state legislators at their annual spring conference April 5-6 in Columbus. The meeting coincides with the start of budget hearings in the Ohio House of Representatives.

“Advocates for the aging will work with the administration and legislators on a budget that reaches our common goals of expanding consumer choices, protecting seniors’ health and safety, and providing value to taxpayers,” Recchie said.

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The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a), a nonprofit organization, is a statewide network of agencies that provide services for the elderly, as well as advocate on behalf of older Ohioans. The Association addresses issues which have an impact on the aging network, provides services to members, and serves as a collective voice for Ohio’s Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).