

PHILADELPHIA CORPORATION FOR AGING
Summary of Public Hearing Testimony and PCA's Responses
October 11, 2017

Holly Lange, President and CEO of PCA welcomed attendees to the Public Hearing and noted that Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) has flat funding for the 2017-18 fiscal year “and we have to make do with what we have.” She expressed gratitude for PCA providers, such as home care providers and senior centers, who work within PCA’s funding limits.

She explained some of the challenges that result from this zero increase:

- There are currently **1,700** people on the waiting list for PCA’s Options program. That waiting list will grow unless more funding becomes available.
- SEPTA received increased Lottery funding, and has raised the costs of its Shared Ride services. PCA has no new money for transportation to help defray its share of the increased cost. As a result, PCA will have to substantially reduce the number of Shared Rides it funds by **30,000** rides this year.
- PCA-funded senior centers face increasing operating costs. However, PCA can provide limited funds to help centers pay for this or for needed capital improvements.

PCA continues to advocate strongly for necessary funding for all of its programs and services. The agency also works creatively with providers to help them operate within the limitations. Recently, for instance, the agency worked with Catholic Health Care Services to change operating hours of two of CHCS’ four senior centers to part-time satellite centers. Despite reduced hours, those two centers can still provide congregate meals, exercise programs, socialization, counseling and other vital programs at a time of severe funding challenges.

She also reported good news about PCA’s Housing Department. Through a \$300,000 grant made over three years, the department is able to provide repairs and modifications to an additional 204 homes to help seniors remain in their homes and thus age in the community.

She also noted that PCA is developing a meal choice initiative for its Aging Waiver home-delivered meals consumers and is currently piloting the meal choice program in South Philadelphia.

The Aging Waiver Program transition was another key topic. She noted that the state will be enrolling all Aging Waiver and adult disabled waiver consumers in Community HealthChoices through three managed care organizations (MCOs): UPMC for You, PA Health and Wellness (Centene) and AmeriHealth Caritas. While the latter has worked in the Philadelphia area, the other two MCOs are new to the area. PCA will have service coordination contracts with all three CHC MCOs.

PCA will be very involved in outreach and education regarding the transition from the Aging Waiver program to CHC. PCA will also be proposing to provide home-delivered meals and home modifications/minor repairs to MCOs on behalf of their consumers.

There were three testimonies received.

Rosemary Daub, Case Management Coordinator
Terri, Clark, Prevention Services Coordinator
ACTION WELLNESS

Ms. Daub's and Ms. Clark's written testimony on behalf Action Wellness conveyed their appreciation for PCA's support of all older adults and especially those living with HIV/AIDS, chronic life-threatening conditions and the LGBT elder community. They cited research that LGBT elders are disproportionately burdened by health disparities including victimization, psychological distress, disability, discrimination and lack of access to aging and health services. They pointed out that social isolation is especially prevalent among LGBT elders, causing them to lack family supports as they age. The testimony also noted that a disproportionate number of LGBT elders and elders living with HIV live in poverty.

PCA's work on behalf of LGBT elders and elders living with chronic illness, including HIV is critical, they stated. Ms. Dauber and Ms. Clark urged PCA to continue its advocacy and its provision of services and supports for these older adults. PCA's services enable such frail homebound elders to remain in their homes and communities as long as possible, and delay or prevent them from entering skilled nursing facilities. ACTION WELLNESS also supported PCA's request for increased funds from the Commonwealth to meet the needs of Philadelphia's growing aging population. This includes an increasing number of LGBT elders and elders living with chronic illness, like HIV, who are and will be in need of PCA services.

Response:

PCA congratulates ACTION WELLNESS on its continued advocacy on behalf of LGBT seniors. As in the past, ACTION WELLNESS provides ongoing training sessions for PCA's annual training series, as well as at the annual regional conference. PCA is appreciative of ACTION WELLNESS' desire to support advocacy efforts to increase funding for seniors in Philadelphia.

**John K. Jallah, Ph.D., Executive Director
AGAPE AFRICAN SENIOR CENTER, INC.**

Rev. Dr. John K. Jallah thanked PCA for its services to the [city's] aging population, especially at a time of stagnant funding and increasing demands. However, he said that PCA's outreach to elder African and Caribbean immigrants remains inadequate: there are no known specific PCA outreach objectives. He termed the elders in this community "a grossly underserved aging population."

Rev. Jallah acknowledged the series of consultative meetings PCA has sponsored with a group of community organizations that serve Philadelphia's African and Caribbean elders. That consultative group has evolved into an entity with which PCA might partner in a more official way, he testified. He recommended that PCA resume funding its community grants program — at an increased level — and allocate a larger percentage to agencies that serve African and Caribbean elders in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way. The grant would be in the form of seed money that would empower these communities. Secondly, he recommended that PCA establish an African and Caribbean Advisory Council to replace the present ad hoc consultative group. The council would also monitor the direct impact of how PCA grant money for the African and Caribbean community agencies would be spent.

Response:

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging continues to provide outreach and services to the African and Caribbean elderly community. In FY17, the Community Relations Department provided close to 30 outreach events for this population. In addition, PCA was able to provide \$5,000.in funds to various

community organizations to support their annual fairs, dinners, and other resource materials. Unfortunately, due to the lack of increase in PCA's allocation we are not able to reinstate the community grants program that we provided two years ago. Finally, PCA whole heartedly supports the concept of creating an African Caribbean Advisory Council. We are currently in the planning process and expect to announce its creation very soon.

**Heshie Zinman, Founder and Board Member
LGBT ELDER INITIATIVE**

Mr. Zinman credited PCA as an Area Agency on Aging that understands the unique needs of LGBT older adults and works to create a culture in aging services where people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are served with dignity and respect. He commended PCA on partnering with the LGBT Elder Initiative (LGBTEI) for projects like the Task Force on HIV & Aging, improving LGBT inclusivity at PCA-funded senior centers, and providing LGBT cultural competence training to senior service professionals.

Mr. Zinman pointed out that despite recent successes, like the PCA collaborations described above, LGBT elders still encounter discrimination and other obstacles to good health. Many LGBT elders are especially reliant on community-based services due to a disproportionate lack of family support, and marginalized communities are increasingly vulnerable in today's political climate. Building bridges between the aging services network and LGBT elders is important to connect LGBT elders with aging provider networks that are safe and welcoming to their unique needs and to educate LGBT elders about resources to help them age well.

Mr. Zinman urged PCA to continue expanding its focus on LGBT aging issues and expressed hope that PCA can continue to grow its services to diverse and underserved populations despite current budget challenges. He noted that LGBTEI is willing to join PCA and other aging service organizations in advocating for more sufficient funding for Pennsylvania's older adults services.

Response:

PCA appreciates the LGBT Elder Initiative's offer to advocate for more funding that will impact seniors in Philadelphia. PCA is grateful for the collaborative approach we have adopted in working to build bridges to the LGBT community. We appreciate the opportunity to work to bring training and education to our senior center network and professional system on the unique needs of this community. PCA continues to support the important dialogues the LGBT Elder Initiative have initiated, and will continue to financially support those efforts again this fiscal year at the same level as last year.