



## Annual Budget Public Hearing Summary of Testimony and Responses June 21, 2023

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Dr. Satya Verma, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) board chair, welcomed everyone and explained that the hearing is intended to review key points in the fiscal year 2023-2024 proposed budget and to allow stakeholders to provide comments on the plan and budget. He connected the hearing to the current needs of older Philadelphians, with increased longevity and chronic conditions, while funding is flat or is shrinking. He then introduced PCA Advisory Council chair, Sandra McNally.

Ms. McNally shared with attendees the role of the Advisory Council as a boots-on-the-ground group committed to serving the community, and introduced PCA President and CEO, Dr. Najja R. Orr.

Dr. Orr welcomed attendees and thanked them for attending PCA's annual Planning and Service Area Public Hearing regarding programs and proposed budget for fiscal year 2023-2024. He expressed pride in what PCA staff continues to accomplish and thanked them for all they have done to support PCA's consumers and mission.

Dr. Orr shared information on PCA programs and their impact on social determinants of health, the trend of increasing reports of need for protective services with a high percentage (25%) of financial exploitation investigations, and innovative new housing programs like Project SHARE and Housemates of Philadelphia. He shared that PCA provided a 4.5% increase in funds to our provider network despite no increase in funding from the Aging Block Grant. He also provided a few aging network updates including introducing the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's proposed Master Plan for Older Adults listening sessions to begin this summer, area agencies on aging (AAAs) retaining the level of care assessment function with a 5-year contract, and Governor Shapiro's proposed budget's impact on older adults. Dr. Orr reviewed the proposed fiscal year 2023-2024 revenue and projected level of service and then opened the floor to testimony from stakeholders.

### Testimonies

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**Reneé Cunningham**  
**Executive Director, Center in the Park**  
**Vice President, Board of Directors, PA Association of Senior Centers (PASC) Southeast Region**

Ms. Cunningham began with three topics she would like to address: 1) Transparency; 2) Technology; and 3) Funding Levels. She shared that it was challenging to review the budget and prepare comments due to the change in format from previous years. She asked questions about the apparent increase in the budget and where funds will be spent. Regarding technology, she asked that PCA improve or replace the reporting system for senior center attendance. On the topic of funding levels, she requested an increase in funding for senior center services and ombudsman programs, and for PCA to allow flexibility in how

subcontractors utilize contract funds. Finally, she shared her pride for her Center in the Park staff and volunteers, and thanked PCA for the opportunity for input and partnership.

**Response:**

*PCA thanks Ms. Cunningham for her testimony and appreciates her and her team's contributions to helping older Philadelphians practice and maintain healthy and engaged aging. As noted, the increase presented in the proposed budget is due to the final American Rescue Plan Act funds for pandemic related support. PCA adjusted this year's budget presentation in an attempt to add specificity regarding how services will be provided. The projected total amount and estimated impact of our revenues were presented to add clarity regarding the intended allocation use and its proposed impact on older Philadelphians. PCA strives to be a good steward of the resources entrusted to the agency and continuously works to improve how we present the budget. PCA hears the concerns regarding the technological challenges in using the reporting system and the budget application and will seek further feedback and evaluate methods to improve and streamline the reporting process. Also, PCA leadership looks forward to continued discussions with Ms. Cunningham regarding funding and other ways to assist Center in the Park meet the needs of the community. PCA thanks Ms. Cunningham for her ongoing support and partnerships. Center in the Park is a valuable resource for older Philadelphians and PCA is grateful for their tremendous work.*

**Eric Ramos**  
**CEO, Impact Total Fitness**  
**Certified Personal Trainer**

Mr. Ramos began by emphasizing the benefits of enhanced fitness for the emotional, mental, and physical health of older adults. He shared his personal family experiences living with acute and chronic illnesses, and connected this to the stories of people he has encountered in the health and wellness industry. He asked for support in developing a program specifically for post-stroke older adults to continue their physical therapy exercises. He thanked PCA and Dr. Orr for the recent increase to providers, but also requested an additional increase in the hourly rate. He ended by thanking PCA for the opportunity to share his testimony.

**Response:**

*PCA values its relationship with Impact Total Fitness and thanks Mr. Ramos for his tireless passion for helping older adults maintain optimal functioning and quality of life through healthy activities. PCA looks forward to further discussions with Mr. Ramos regarding the exploration of new and innovative ways to empower older adults to engage in their health and well-being. The challenge of trying to meet the growing needs of older adults and the rising costs of meeting those needs with a tight budget is felt by all. PCA will continue to evaluate our funding and to advocate for adequate resources to help our health and wellness programs continue providing quality services to older adults.*

## **Q&A with Dr. Orr**

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During the Q&A, questions were asked about how community agencies can assist PCA in advocacy for funding. Dr. Orr recommended the use of the upcoming Pennsylvania Department of Aging's Master Plan for Older Adults (MPOA) listening sessions. MPOA has an ambitious timeframe, and information

received through listening sessions this summer and fall could be used to inform the needs that will be addressed in the next state budget. PCA will soon present the agency's plan for listening sessions throughout the city and will be reaching out to venues to host. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging will also be holding virtual sessions, and is accepting input via mail, email, and online form. Additionally, PCA continues to keep local elected officials informed of our budget cuts and the resulting impact on services.