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2017 State Legislative Agenda

1. Preserve Washington's long term care infrastructure and increase support for services that enable adults to remain in their homes and in the community, such as adult day health, case management programs, and other programs funded through the Senior Citizen's Services Act.

Services provided at home and in the community delay or prevent the need for seniors to move to nursing homes. Most seniors prefer to age at home and services provided at home require considerably less State funds. In 2016, Sr. Citizens Services Act funds helped provide adult day health, case management, information and assistance, counseling, mental health treatment and/or transportation services to 1,417 Kirkland & Bellevue residents. Caregiver support programs, which are funded through the Older American's Act and State Family Caregiver monies, help unpaid family caregivers by such services as respite care, counseling, training and support groups. King County United Way funding cuts of \$1.8 million dollars for programs serving the disabled and seniors have severely impacted adult day health, caregiver support and nutrition programs.

2. Restore the Medicaid adult hearing hardware benefit discontinued in 2010 which provided hearing aids, necessary supplies and related services to Medicaid clients age 21 and older.

Representative McBride and Senator Bailey have introduced bills that mandate coverage of hearing aids under Medicaid (HB 1264 and SB 5179). Nearly 50% of persons age 75 and older have a disabling hearing loss. Untreated hearing loss has been associated with lack of understanding, social isolation, depression, reduced quality of life and cognitive decline. Hearing loss can be mistaken for dementia. Please support the following bills:

HB 1264: Specifying medical assistance coverage for hearing devices for adults.

SB 5179: Requiring coverage for hearing instruments under public employee and Medicaid programs.

3. Support legislation that will protect vulnerable adults from fraudulent and predatory practices, financial exploitation, abuse, and mistreatment. Please support the following bills:

HB 1153 and **SB 5099** reduce barriers to prosecution by creating the crime of theft from a vulnerable adult and by lowering the requisite mental state of conviction of Criminal Mistreatment in the 1st and 2nd degree.

HB 1139 and **SB 5447:** Expands the role of the Office of Public Guardianship to include supportive decision-making and estate administration.

4. Support legislation that addresses affordable housing and fully funds Housing Trust Fund.

There is a critical need for affordable housing on the Eastside of King County and in particular affordable housing for seniors. According to the 2013 East King County Housing Analysis by the City of Kirkland and ARCH, approximately 59% of renters aged 65 or older in East King County paid 35% or more of their income for housing, which is considered cost burdened. The draft 2016-2019 Seattle-King County Area Plan on Aging reported that the "Elder Economic Security Standard Index" for Seattle-King County shows that monthly household expenses of which housing takes a large percentage greatly exceeds the average Social Security benefit, which for many seniors is their main source of income. Please support the following bill:

HB 1797: Encourages affordable housing development and preservation by providing cities limited sales tax remittance for qualifying investments, providing cities and counties authority to use real estate excise taxes to support affordable housing, and with council authority to impose the affordable housing sales tax.

2017 Federal Legislative Agenda

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1. Support adequate funding for the Older Americans Act, a program that funds critical services which promote the health and independence of older adults. Support and maintain SHIP and other programs which benefit older adults.
2. Advocate for passage of S.568 and H.R. 1421, the “Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act of 2017”, which amend the Social Security Act “to count a period of receipt of outpatient observation services in a hospital toward satisfying the 3-day inpatient hospital stay requirement for coverage of skilled nursing facility services under Medicare.”
3. Eliminate the income cap on Social Security to secure the long-term solvency of the system.
4. Expand the current Medicare benefits to include dental, vision, and hearing. Oppose changes to Medicare that could result in cuts to benefits, increased costs for beneficiaries, or reduced coverage for older Americans.
5. Oppose changes to the current Medicaid program that could result in cuts to benefits or reduce benefit coverage to older Americans.

Priority Local Issues

1. Support accessibility in public buildings for all members of the community.
2. Support affordable housing for older adults.
3. Promote policies for transportation options that increase mobility and create livable communities for older adults.

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