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2023 State Legislative Agenda

Adequately support and fund Washington's Long-Term Care Infrastructure and programs impacting seniors.

Personal Needs Allowance Currently, an individual receiving Medicaid and living in medical institution or residential setting, such as an adult family home or assisted living facility, is only able to retain \$75.36 per month of their income, for personal needs, (e.g., clothes, hair care, snacks). Please support H.B. 1128, which has passed the House, and SB 5183 which increase the allowance to \$100 per month in July 2023 and commencing 2024 will yearly adjust the amount as delineated in the bill.

The Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) Case Management Program serves approximately 50,000 Medicaid recipients in their homes, although they qualify for nursing home care, thus saving the state many dollars. The proposed AAA case management funding does not keep up with cost of living due to the use of a 30-year-old formula. Please support budget provisos, to be sponsored by Representatives Tharinger and Bateman and Senator Muzzall, to increase the funding by \$4.9 million, which will be matched by \$5 million in federal funds. This will enable all AAA case managers to receive salaries in parity with state employees performing comparable work.

The Health Home program provides care coordination for persons on both Medicaid AND Medicare, who have the most expensive and complex chronic health problems. By helping clients manage their health the coordinators keep chronic conditions from getting out of control, thus reducing the number of emergency department visits, stays in nursing homes, and hospitalizations.

Please support the budget proviso request of Representative Tharinger and Senator Randall for \$3.622 million in state funds from the general fund, which will be matched by about 3.7 million in federal funding. This is an increase in funding, needed due to the increased cost of hiring and retaining qualified care coordinators. **PLEASE NOTE** that because our state has an agreement with Medicare to share federal health care savings, and the Washington Health Home program greatly reduces Medicare costs, our state is anticipated to receive considerably more dollars from Medicare than \$3.622 million.

The Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocates for residents of nursing homes, adult family homes, and assisted living facilities and promotes and protects the resident rights guaranteed to residents under state and federal law. The program emphasizes their success in resolving complaints between residents and their facility. Please support the Department of Commerce decision package for the Ombudsman Program, which will help improve staffing levels and enable the program to serve more residents. <https://www.waombudsman.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/94/2023/01/DP-ML-EC-Long-Term-Care-Ombuds-1.pdf>

Support and fund legislation that will assist persons with dementia, their families, and organizations that serve persons with dementia.

In 2021 our Legislature, in response to the request of the Dementia Action Collaborative (DAC) and others, funded two Dementia Resource Catalyst pilot (DRCP) programs at two Area Agency on Aging (AAA) sites. Please support the DAC current request for \$1.734 million for two additional DRCP programs at AAA sites. The programs are designed to close gaps in services and provide families with needed resources, increase access to education and support for families after a dementia diagnosis, and provide persons with dementia the necessary supports to live in their own homes. We believe Senator Robinson will be sponsoring this request.

Increase Access to Death with Dignity under Washington's Death with Dignity Act

In 2008 Washington voters approved an Initiative, now incorporated into RCW 70.245, which established the Death with Dignity Act. This statute allows a qualified patient with a terminal illness and less than 6 months to live to request and self-administer life ending medication. The statute contains many requirements, that make it difficult or impossible for many terminally ill persons to benefit from the Act. (e.g., who can prescribe medicine, waiting periods.) We request that you support HB 1281 and SB 5179, which address unnecessary provisions in RCW 70.245.

Prevent robocalls and keep Washingtonians safe in hot weather

Many Washingtonians, particularly seniors, are scammed by Robo calls. Attorney General Ferguson refers to a survey that states "more than 835,000 Washingtonians lost money to scam robocalls in 2021." SHB 1051 seeks to prevent robocalls in many ways including: a) expansion of who can be held liable for robocalls b) combating fraudulent or misleading caller identification c) defining commercial solicitation to include initiation of a voice communication for the purpose of inducing a person to provide personally identifying information. Please take action to prevent Robo Calls.

In 2021 157 Washington residents lost their lives due to heat waves. It has been reported that over 80% of the people who die from heat-related causes are over age 60. Please support SHB 1329 and SSB 5366 which a) Prohibit utilities or landlords from involuntarily terminating electric or water service for nonpayment to residential users on any day for which the National Weather Service has issued or intends to issue a heat-related alert b) Delineate when utilities and landlords must make a reasonable attempt to reconnect services for dwellings previously disconnected for nonpayment. Nineteen states have protections against shut offs in extreme heat.

Support legislation that will adequately fund the Housing Trust Fund and assist seniors to age in place, while retaining the power of municipalities to enact zoning law

Due to the rising value of homes and the increase in the cost of living, many seniors cannot afford to pay property taxes. HB 1355 and HB 1560 will help seniors to age in place by increasing the income thresholds that make one eligible for the property tax reduction and requiring adjustments to the income threshold, upon which discounts are based, to be made every 3 years rather than every 5 years as at present. Please support these changes.