



## Wisconsin Caregiver Support Community Statewide Meeting Advocacy Update – May 24, 2022

### State

#### **Aging Advocacy Day 2022 – May 11, 2022**

Nearly **200 advocates** from across Wisconsin registered for Aging Advocacy Day. Aging Advocacy Day included advocates from all 33 state Senate districts and over 70% of the 99 state Assembly districts.

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) hosted this event focused on three priority areas:

- Invest in Aging/Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Network Funding
- **Support Family Caregivers**
- Keep Voting Simple

Three different policy asks were associated with the Support Family Caregivers focus area. These included:

- Support a family caregiver tax credit;
- Increase respite funding throughout Wisconsin; and
- Expand Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) to -
  - include grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings; and
  - create an employee-funded FLMA insurance program to fund paid leave.

See the talking points documents for the Aging Advocacy Day priorities at this link:

<https://gwaar.org/aging-advocacy-day-2022>. Aging advocates will continue work to advance these priorities and other issues of importance to older adults and family caregivers in the 2023-2024 legislative session and throughout the 2023-2025 biennial state budget process.

We are currently tallying the numbers of calls placed to legislative offices using AARP's toll-free legislative phone lines. This information will help us to determine the reach of aging advocates and the impact of Aging Advocacy Day. Approximately 25% of the individuals registered for Aging Advocacy Day completed an evaluation of the event. Of those responding, 48% participated for the first time and 98% would recommend participation in Aging Advocacy Day to a friend. Aging Advocacy Day 2023 will be an in-person event at the State Capitol in Madison, stay-tuned for updates!

## State Legislative Update

The Wisconsin State Legislature adjourned in March 2022. For the remainder of the year, legislators will focus on committee work and elections campaigns. All 99 state Assembly Representatives and half of the state's 33 Senators (those in odd numbered districts) are up for re-election this fall. Thirty of these state legislators (nearly 25% of the full legislature) have already announced they will retire, won't seek re-election, or are running for another office. Do you know who represents you in the state legislature? If not, find out by entering your home voting address in the box labeled "Who Are My Legislators?" found at this link: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>.

With state legislators spending more time in their districts, now is the perfect time to contact your state Senator and Assembly Representative to invite them to participate in a local event you are hosting or to attend an upcoming board meeting to hear about priority issues and concerns from board members, program participants, and constituents. If your legislator(s) is not running for re-election or is facing opposition in the upcoming election, find out about the candidates who are running for the position and talk with them to learn if they are supportive of issues/concerns important to you; this will help you make an informed decision come election time (Primary Election: Tues., Aug. 9, 2022 and General Election: Tues, Nov. 8, 2022). By late June, voters can learn what/who will be on their ballot for the Aug. primary by inserting their address at this link: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/Whats-On-My-Ballot>.

## Federal

### Older Americans Act (OAA) Funding FY 2023

The final FY 2022 funding proved to be very disappointing to OAA advocates. Faced with an ever-growing aging population, increasing demand for access to services and programs, and amidst continued pandemic stressors, funding levels for FY 2022 are inadequate to meet the needs of older adults and family caregivers. Our advocacy to achieve sufficient, sustainable funding for OAA programs and services for FY 2023 and beyond must continue.

Members of Congress have already started the process of determining regular FY 2023 funding levels. GWAAR's national association, USAging, sent their annual appropriations request letter to Congress outlining the critical importance of investing in OAA and other vital discretionary programs that help older adults live with independence at home. USAging staff have also been requesting meetings with key Hill offices. These are very important steps, **but we must do our part as well. Members of Congress need to hear directly from their constituents.**

Congress must recognize that funding for the Aging Network's programs and services needs to be **significantly increased on a long-term basis** to serve the rapidly growing numbers of older adults who need them, to meet the greater complexity of client needs and to address the workforce challenges that are affecting older adults' access to services.

For FY 2023, **USAgging has requested a doubling of the funding for four prioritized subtitles of the Act:** Title III B (Supportive Services), Title VI (Native American Aging Programs), Title III D (evidence-based health and wellness) and Title III E (National Family Caregiver Support Program). This is the level of investment these programs needed before COVID-19 and reflects what these programs will absolutely need after it! The continued erosion of critical OAA funding cannot continue. **For the Aging Network to meet the needs of older adults and family caregivers in their communities, it is time to grow the base funding for these essential programs permanently!**

We must ensure that our members of Congress know that increased demand for services resulting from the pandemic have continued and exist alongside changing demographics and the after-effects of a decade of stagnant funding—all of which risks the health, well-being and independence of their older constituents!

**Take Action: Contact your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson** (see [Wisconsin Members of the 117th Congress](#) for contact information) **now to advocate for funding for OAA programs and services and/or to let them know how important this funding is to meeting the needs of older adults and family caregivers in your community. Make sure to include local statistics that demonstrate the need for an increase in OAA funding and to highlight the growing demand for services in your community.** Read USAging's [appropriations request letter](#) and then write your own localized letter including what this funding means for the older adults and caregivers in your community or tribe. To find out who your U.S. Representative is, enter your zip code in the white box next to the "Look Up" section in the top righthand corner of this page: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>. For assistance in writing a letter to or contacting your federal legislators, please feel free to contact me at: Janet Zander – (715) 677-6723 or [janet.zander@gwaar.org](mailto:janet.zander@gwaar.org).