

## Governor Meets with Aging Advocates

Advocacy representatives from Area Agency on Aging 1-B participated in a discussion roundtable with Governor Jennifer Granholm and administration officials Ishmael Ahmed, director of Michigan Department of Human Services, and Sharon Gire, director of Michigan Office of Services to the Aging (OSA) to discuss ways to improve advocacy when communicating with legislators in Lansing. The event was sponsored by the *Regional Senior Collaborative*, a coalition of 25 Detroit area non-profits engaged in providing services and resources to older adults. The officials praised the aging network's work with vulnerable older adults and individuals with disabilities, and emphasized that advocacy is effective at the state level, despite program cuts over the years. Director Gire pointed to the MI Choice Medicaid Waiver program as having been borne of advocacy.

### Governor Offers Advocacy Advice

The Governor offered the following advice to improve effectiveness of advocacy efforts:

- Encourage participation by older adults at rallies and local events attended by legislators.
- Invite lawmakers to come to our communities and organizations to meet individuals and families who depend on state supported services.
- This election season provides an opportunity to get commitments from candidates to support OSA and the Medicaid "optional" programs such as MI Choice and Home Help.

Other advocacy suggestions from participants included demonstrating to legislators how the *Regional Senior Collaborative* member organizations work together to support aging services, and trumpeting the person-centered approaches to delivery of services.

### **JUST ANNOUNCED! HEARING IN DETROIT ON DCH BUDGET**

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health will hold a hearing on the FY 2011 budget recommendations for the Department of Community Health, which provides funding for the OSA, Mental Health, Public Health, and Medicaid. You are encouraged to attend to testify about the need for state supported services.

**Monday, March 22, 2010 10:00 am—2:00 pm.**

**Sinai-Grace Hospital Auditorium 6071 W. Outer Drive, Detroit, MI 48235**



The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a nonprofit agency serving the needs of older adults in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw counties. For more information about the Senior Advocacy Network (SAN) or to receive future editions of The Advocate, contact Ann Langford at (248) 262-1282 or [alangford@aaa1b.com](mailto:alangford@aaa1b.com).

## Revenue Enhancements Should They Be Used to Close the Budget Gap?

Governor Jennifer Granholm’s FY 2011 budget proposal includes an 8% cut in funding for the Office of Services to the Aging, which provides monies for nutrition, volunteer, and in-home services. This funding cut is based on proposed new revenues such as a sales tax on services and a physicians tax, and is likely to grow if new revenues are not approved. The AAA 1-B would like to know whether advocates support the generation of new revenue (such as taxes) to support state services, in addition to the proposed cuts and government reforms.

The table below lists of the enhancements, which have garnered attention in Lansing. To help the AAA 1-B develop an advocacy position relative to the budget debate, please take a few moments to complete a brief online survey sharing your preferences. Survey results will be presented to the AAA 1-B Advisory Council and Board of Directors for consideration, and shared with you. Thank you for your participation. To take the survey go to: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VJ55TYT> or contact Ann Langford at (248) 262-1282 to have a survey mailed to you.

Strategy	Potential Revenue Generated
Tax on physician services of 3%	\$300 million in state funds; \$822 million in federal funds
Sales tax decrease from 6% to 5.5%, and applied to certain services as well as consumer goods	\$1.65 billion for the state’s School Aid fund, relieving the general fund from subsidizing schools
Replace flat rate state income tax with graduated rate tax	\$600 million
Double Michigan’s Beer Tax to 4 cents per 12 oz. beer	\$42 million
Offer specialty license plate for sale	Comparable programs have raised from \$46,000 to \$447,000
Add a check-off donation box to the state income tax form	Comparable programs in other states have raised from \$11,000 to \$250,000
End sales tax exemption for food and beverages sold in vending machines	\$25 million
End exemptions of bad debt of retailers who collect sales tax	\$64 million
Tax international calls and wide area telecommunication services the same as interstate phone communications.	\$59.8 million
End exemption for tobacco wholesalers of taxes on goods sold to retailers who go out of business or default on payments to the wholesaler	\$17.7 million
Decouple the phase-out of the Federal Estate Tax to permit the state to again receive a portion of the taxes paid by Michigan estates	\$250 million
Reduce senior tax preferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freeze the amount of pension income exempt from state income tax at current levels over \$40,000 per year for an individual, and over \$80,000 for a couple</li> <li>• Eliminate the double or second individual tax deduction of \$2500 for an older adult with funding targeted to older adult services</li> </ul>	Unknown



## **2010 Legislative Advocacy Platform**

### **Protect vulnerable seniors: Fund senior and long term care programs**

No further cuts to Office of Services to the Aging programs like home delivered meals, in-home care, senior volunteers, and caregiver respite.

- Approve Governor's recommended \$14 million increase in the MI Choice home-based nursing home alternative.
- No further cuts to Medicaid health, mental health and nursing home providers.

### **Protect vulnerable seniors: pass Elder Abuse laws**

- The 2006 Governor's Elder Abuse Task Force Report calls for the adoption of several laws that would enhance protection for vulnerable older adults. Not one piece of legislation implementing the recommendations has been passed by the legislature.
- More than 20 elder abuse bills are before the legislature, and 8 bills have passed the House and are awaiting action in the Senate. These bills must pass.
- Protections needed by older adults include: require reporting by financial institutions of suspected abuse; increase penalties for abuse or exploitation; require court appointed guardians to be bonded; allow videotaped testimony; and allow courts to freeze assets when necessary to protect seniors' savings.

### **Invest in prevention programs that work**

- Support Older Michiganians Act programs that prevent, delay, or divert dependence on costly Medicaid and institutional care.
- Expand financing for evidence-based wellness programs, offered by senior centers and other aging network organizations, that lower health care costs.

### **Make Michigan a retirement destination of choice**

- Support legislation that creates communities that embrace an aging and disabled population. Seniors are a \$32 billion economic force in Michigan. Their economic contributions create jobs that will not leave the state. Their income is imported into the state's economy (Social Security, pension, earnings on investments).

### **Reform Michigan government and taxation to match current conditions and needs**

- Restructure Michigan's tax system with fairness to promote economic growth; reform government operations to maximize cost effectiveness; and raise needed revenues for state-supported services by closing tax loopholes.

Older Michiganians Day 2010 is sponsored by Priority Health and Presbyterian Villages of Michigan. Steering Committee members include AARP, Alzheimer's Association Greater Michigan Chapter, Area Agencies on Aging Association of Michigan, Michigan Association of Senior Centers, Senior Volunteer Programs of Michigan, Michigan Directors of Services to the Aging, and Michigan Senior Advocates Council.

**SAVE THE DATE**



## OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY 2010

Thursday, June 10, 2010  
On the Steps of the State Capitol  
Lansing, Michigan

This special annual event, organized by a group of organizations including Area Agencies on Aging, is the premier opportunity to advocate for services, policies, and programs which enhance the independence and dignity of older adults in Michigan.

Adults over age 60 in Michigan are growing in number unlike ever before! By 2020, they will represent 20% of our state's population. Here's our chance to tell legislators that providing vital services and programs to older adults actually strengthens the state's economy.

Senior Advocacy Network members are invited to attend Capitol Rally Day in Lansing and tickets to the event are available through AAA 1-B. There are also a number of other ways to make your voice heard.

- Participate in a county-level rally in the weeks leading up to Older Michiganians Day. We will tell you when and where in future editions of The Advocate.
- Contact your state legislators regarding legislation that impacts older adults.
- Most of all, continue to advocate in your local communities and share your stories of how vital aging services have made a difference to you or an older adult close to you.

For information or tickets, contact Ann Langford, Advocacy Specialist  
at (248) 262-1282 or [alangford@aaa1b.com](mailto:alangford@aaa1b.com)