



PA ASSOC. OF SENIOR CENTERS

Dear Representatives and Senators:

We write out of grave concern for Governor Wolf's proposal to consolidate the Department of Aging with three other departments. The more we learn of the proposal the more we see this to be a dismantling of the Department of Aging (PDA) and its powers and duties that puts senior citizens at risk.

Recent experiences of transferring functions from the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and PDA to the Department of Human Services (DHS) heightens our concern about the disruption of services to seniors. One need only look to April of 2016 when DHS took the enrollment function away from the AAAs and gave it to the private contractor Maximus. Because many vulnerable and frail seniors were left without essential services, the Senate and House held a joint committee hearing in October of 2016 to insist that DHS act immediately to correct the problems. Administration officials have testified at House and Senate budget hearings that "things have gotten better" but could not say that the problems have been fully resolved.

Our concern is not with your vision of the consolidation of Harrisburg based administration functions, such as IT, Human Resources, and licensing inspections. It is with including the Department of Aging in the group of departments to be entirely merged. We believe Harrisburg based functional consolidation can be done, as it has been in the past, without dismantling the entire Department of Aging and diminishing its primary mission of advocacy for seniors and on-the-ground service delivery to seniors in the communities of our Commonwealth.

As you know and as stated on page E26-4 of the proposed budget, not a single dollar of General Fund monies is used to support the Department of Aging or the programs it administers. The costs of the Department, including administrative costs, are paid with Lottery funds or Federal funds. Therefore, the only way dismantling the Department of Aging could help to reduce the General Fund deficit would be to shift more lottery funds into General Fund programs, at the expense of senior citizen lottery programs.

As recently as three years ago DHS, with Legislative approval, was withdrawing \$500 million from the Lottery fund to subsidize the General Fund for Medicaid payments. This withdraw caused an increased waiting list and short funding for aging programs that are funded only by the Lottery. To the Governor's credit he decreased the withdraw for the past two years but now he is advocating dismantling what arguably has been the best run department of state government that costs the taxpayers nothing to operate.

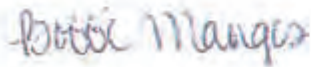
Today, as the size of Pennsylvania's aging population continues to grow, it is even more important that these seniors have a Cabinet level Department charged with advocating

for their needs and administering the community delivery of their services than it was in 1978 when the Legislature recognized the value of creating a Department of Aging and when they reaffirmed that decision with the passage of Act 1988-153.

Finally, we are very disappointed with the process by which the consolidation proposal was created. Administration officials testified at Senate hearings that the Administration did not conduct a single public hearing and does not plan to do so. We believe that a plan to dismantle several Cabinet Level Departments deserves more transparency and careful consideration, planning, and community input than has been done in this case. Thankfully, the House and Senate have been responding to this concern.

We respectfully ask that you do not turn back the clock and that you reject the Governor's proposal to dismantle the Department of Aging by blending it into a new giant department where the risk of the aged being lost in the milieu is greater than the prospect of them being adequately served.

Thank you and sincerely,



PASC President



Rick Daugherty, Legislative Chair

Sample Letter

Urgent!

Dear Senator/Representative _____,

We need your help in saving the PA Department of Aging! The Governor recently proposed a consolidation of four state departments including the Department of Aging. This action would totally dismantle the Department along with its powers and duties to represent the aging population. This would also jeopardize the lottery fund, which provides the majority of the funding supporting older adult programs and services. As an older adult and voter, I encourage you to take a position against this consolidation to insure that older adults continue to have a voice in the State of PA and that services will continue to be accessible and available to those in need.

Sincerely,

Phone:

Address:

Name