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Contact: Alexandra Newman, communications and outreach coordinator

269-408-2369; [alexandranewman@areaagencyonaging.org](mailto:alexandranewman@areaagencyonaging.org)

### **AAA kicks off Older Americans Month with Legislative Forum open to community**

ST. JOSEPH — The community is invited to meet with state elected officials at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual tri-county Legislative Forum on Monday, May 1 hosted by the Area Agency on Aging.

The forum is set for 2-3:30 p.m. at the Campus for Creative Aging, 2920 Lakeview Ave., St. Joseph.

The event will provide an opportunity for seniors, caregivers, people with disabilities and professionals working in the field of aging to engage in a dialog with state legislators around a platform of issues key to people's ability to age with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities.

"Decisions made in Lansing have a direct and far-reaching impact on the quality of life for seniors in Michigan. This event brings together seniors, caregivers and advocates from Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties to meet with their state representatives, senators and public policy staff to discuss critical issues facing seniors in Southwest Michigan," says Christine Vanlandingham, Chief Executive Officer for the Region IV Area Agency on Aging. "The advocates will urge legislators to take action and ensure adequate funding in the FY2024 budget for critical supports and services older adults need to stay independent in their homes."

This event kicks off Older Americans Month and precedes Senior Action Week in Michigan, May 15-19.

The five advocacy priorities for Senior Action Week this year are: Supporting family and informal caregivers through the establishment of a Caregiver Resource Model; Supporting and strengthening the direct care workforce; Supporting and strengthening the Long-term Care Ombudsman program; Increasing access to home and community-based services; and Expanding access to the MI Choice Waiver.

During Senior Action Week, the Area Agency on Aging will feature policy topics daily on its [Facebook](#) page aimed to raise statewide awareness around these priorities of importance for area seniors.

In addition, residents may tune in to the Older Michiganians Day [Livestream](#) at 11 a.m. May 17 from the lawn of the Michigan Capitol Building where advocates from around the state will come together to rally around these policy priorities.

Representatives Joey Andrews (D-District 38), Steve Carra (R-District 36), Brad Paquette (R-District 37), and Pauline Wendzel (R-District 39) are scheduled to attend the May 1 event, as are legislative staff from the offices of Senators Jonathon Lindsey (R-District 17) and Aric Nesbitt (R-District 20).

For more information on this year's advocacy priorities, Senior Action Week or Older Michiganians Day, and to sign a letter of support for these priorities, visit <https://areaagencyonaging.org/advocacy/>.

#### About Region IV Area Agency on Aging

Region IV Area Agency on Aging is a private, not-for-profit corporation. Established in 1974 for the business of developing age supportive commerce and services, it plays a major role in planning, funding, and delivery of a host of services. Empowerment and independence of community members are driving themes behind its efforts. Designated by the State of Michigan to receive federal Older Americans Act funds for planning and development, the agency manages an array of government contracts for service delivery in southwest Michigan. Its primary service area includes Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. For more information about the RIVAAA, visit [www.areaagencyonaging.org](http://www.areaagencyonaging.org)

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