



PLATFORM FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

SENIOR ACTION WEEK: APRIL 29 - MAY 3, 2024
OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY: MAY 1, 2024

1. SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

The Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsmen work with residents of licensed long-term care facilities such as nursing homes (NH), home for the aged (HFA), and adult foster care (AFC) homes with a goal of improving quality care for residents.

Michigan currently ranks 50th out of 53 programs in our ratio of ombudsman staff to beds. A recent review of the ombudsman program found that to reach the recommended minimum staff-to-bed ratio of 1:2000, Michigan needs to add 33 more full-time ombudsmen at a cost of about \$3 million. The funding formula used to distribute Ombudsman funding has also not been updated since 1987.

ACTION: Urge the Legislature to adequately staff Michigan's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program by appropriating a \$3 million permanent increase in the MDHHS budget to staff 33 new full-time positions.

ACTION: Support the Commission on Services to the Aging in continuing to work on avenues to update the Ombudsman Funding Formula with current data and formula factors to distribute increased funds more equitably.

2. SUPPORT FAMILY AND INFORMAL CAREGIVERS

Family caregivers provide essential care to older adults and loved ones. It is estimated that 1.73 million Michiganians provide an estimated 1.1 billion hours of voluntary care worth approximately \$19.6 billion per year and are the largest source of long-term services and supports in the country. With the continuing direct care workforce shortage, support for caregivers is even more important to assist older adults in their homes. Without continued family-provided help, the cost to Michigan's health and Long-Term Services and Supports systems will skyrocket.

ACTION: Urge policymakers to support a permanent \$5 million appropriation in the FY25 budget distributed to AAAs to support continued development of AAA Caregiver Resource Centers, caregiver educational opportunities, services and supports with a focus on health equity.

ACTION: Urge policymakers to pass the Caring for MI Family Tax Credit to provide tax relief of up to \$5,000 per year for family caregivers.

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3. EXPAND ACCESS TO MI CHOICE

Michigan ranks near the bottom in the proportion of taxpayer dollars spent by states to provide long-term care through home and community-based services (HCBS) versus institutional care. In Michigan during Fiscal Year 2023, only 29% of Long-term Services and Supports (LTSS) funding was allocated to HCBS while 71% went to institutional settings – far below the national average of 53% of LTSS funding going towards HCBS. The MI Choice Medicaid Waiver Program is an in-home service program that enables seniors and adults with a disability who meet eligibility requirements to receive LTSS in their home rather than a nursing facility.

ACTION: Urge the legislature to support an increase of the participant's asset limit (currently \$2,000) in the MI Choice Medicaid Waiver Program that reflects inflation that has occurred since the current rate was established.

ACTION: Urge the legislature to bring equity between HCBS and institutional care by rebalancing Medicaid LTSS funding to at least the national average of 53%.

4. INCREASE ACCESS TO HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

In Michigan, there are currently 6,161 seniors on waiting lists for essential non-Medicaid in-home services provided through Michigan's Administration for Community Living Supports (ACLS). ACLS funded services include home delivered meals, in-home personal care, homemaking, and respite care that delay or prevent the need for more costly long-term care interventions.

ACTION: Support the Silver Key Coalition's request for a \$7 million increase for ACLS in-home services.

ACTION: Support the Silver Key Coalition's request to make the \$1 million increase for home delivered meals in ACLS' FY24 budget permanent.

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