



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging

February 10, 2023

To the 193rd General Court:

On behalf of the 350 cities and towns that have established a municipally based Council on Aging (COA), we want to thank members of the 193rd General Court for their continued support of their Councils on Aging in their communities, we are truly grateful that so many of you made COAs a priority.

As you begin this new Legislative session, MCOA respectfully asks for your support on the following legislative priorities:

LEGISLATION

We urge you to co-sponsor the following legislation, [SD1382/HD3449](#) *An Act Relative to Councils on Aging*, filed by *Senator Rausch, Representative Donaghue*.

This bill updates an outdated statute that is not clear enough to reflect the current scope of the Councils' structure and responsibility. This legislation will ensure consistency in structure amongst the Councils in cities and towns by acknowledging the current status of the Councils as either supervisory or advisory and clarifying the current structure of oversight and hiring of staff.

BUDGET REQUEST

MCOA is respectfully requesting a modest increase in funding for two line-items that will allow us to provide services and supports to more older adults in the 350 cities and towns we serve.

Line Item 9110-9002- Local Aid to Municipal Councils on Aging - **\$26,300,000** (\$3.9M increase from FY2023)

- This funding will provide each municipality with \$14 per elder per year, a needed increase from the \$12 allocated in FY2023 (Formula Grant Program, FG).
- This funding level will also restore the 90/10 proportional split between the Formula grant program and the Service Incentive Grant (SIG) program which amounts to \$2,163,947 of the total request. SIG Grants to COA's are competitive, align with priorities set by the Administration and Legislature, and promote regionalization, outreach, transportation, and innovation.

Line item 9110-1640 - Geriatric Mental Health (Older Adult Behavioral Health)- **\$3.5 million** (\$1M increase from FY2023)

- The current allocation of \$2.5 million provides services via Elder Mental Health Outreach Teams to less than 50% of the municipalities and we join with advocates from across the Behavioral Health and Elder Care networks to request additional funding to meet the current need.

Councils On Aging are the frontline of providing programs, services, supports, and resources for older adults across the Commonwealth, and served as literal lifelines for hundreds of thousands of older adults during the last three years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As I am sure you are aware, in the last decade, the Councils have also experienced tremendous growth from the boomer generation while still trying to assist older generations. To try and keep up with the increased demand for services, the Councils have worked in close partnership with state agencies to identify the challenges and implement programs and services to meet the needs of all older adults in the Commonwealth.

To maintain the level of services we provide to all seniors, we are requesting these two increases in the FY2024 budget.

BACKGROUND:

Line Item 9110-9002 - Local Aid to Municipal Councils on Aging

The COAs work is accomplished in part through Line Item 9110-9002 which funds two programs: the Service Incentive Grant program (SIG) and the Formula Grant Program (FG). SIG was the original intent of the line item in FY80 and was established to build capacity, promote regionalization, and foster innovation. The Formula Grant was developed in FY82, using the 1980 decennial US Census to fund a per capita allocation to augment local budgets. The FG focused on services and programs for older adults and continues to be allocated based on the US decennial Federal Census. Over the last two decades, 9110-9002 has been split roughly 90% for FG and 10% for SIG. The SIG continues to be competitive, align with priorities set by the Administration and Legislature, and promotes regionalization, outreach, transportation and innovation.

As mentioned above, the demand for services and supports for older adults has increased tremendously in recent years. This is due not only to the influx of “baby boomers” turning 60, as nearly 25% of the Commonwealth’s population is now over the age of 60, but also to the impact of COVID-19 on older adults.

The Donahue Institute at UMASS/Boston estimates that between 2010 and 2035, the age 60+ cohort will increase on average 45,661 people/year.

Projection of the Population by Age Cohort

Population	2020	2025	2030	2035
60+	1,721,462	1,925,417	2,049,347	2,098,125

Data Source: Donahue Institute, UMASS/Boston

As the first stop on the elder care continuum, our statewide network of Councils on Aging and Senior Centers have experienced overwhelming demand for services, particularly for our economic security programs, healthy aging and wellness programs, transportation, supportive day programs, and our outreach efforts to link older adults to much needed federal and state benefits.

The current Formula Grant of \$12 per elder, combined with the inflationary fiscal challenges we are facing, do not address this continued growth of the older adult population that crosses the threshold of our Commonwealth’s Senior Centers every day. The Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging (MCOA) asks for your support as we seek to increase the Council on Aging (COA) Formula Grant, line item 9110-9002, from \$12 per elder per year to \$14 per elder per year for FY24 in order to help the Councils meet the increased needs. It is important to note that the Formula Grant is the only standardized funding that we receive from the Commonwealth to meet the needs of adults 60 and older, a rate lower than the hourly minimum wage.

Line item 9110-1640 - Geriatric Mental Health (Older Adult Behavioral Health)

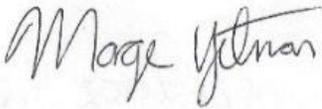
COVID has had a devastating impact on older adults, not just in their physical health, but also with their behavioral health including isolation, loneliness, depression, addiction, suicide, substance use, amongst other devastating outcomes. Now, more than ever, any increase in line item 9110-1640 would further develop the Behavioral Health Services to our Commonwealth's 1.7 million older adults. The current allocation of \$2.5 million is a significant investment which provides vital services through the Elder Mental Health Outreach Teams but is only enough to cover less than 50% of the municipalities. With an increase of \$1M in this line item, we could provide critical mental health services through the Outreach Teams to many more municipalities to address the significant need.

I hope you will call on MCOA to provide any backup or information you may need to understand the work of the Councils on Aging, the proposed legislation and the funding that is being requested.

If you have any questions about these requests, please do not hesitate to contact Betsy Connell, Executive Director of MCOA at elizabeth@mcoaonline.com or Nomita Ganguly at nganguly@verizon.net or 781-354-2444.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and your support of the Commonwealth's older adults. We look forward to working with you during this new Legislative session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marge Yetman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marge Yetman
MCOA Chair and
Director, Burlington Council on Aging