

# ADVOCATES for Senior Issues

OVER  
**40**  
YEARS OF  
ADVOCACY  
ADVOCATES  
for Senior Issues

YOU'RE INVITED

## AFSI MEMBERSHIP MEETING

April 19, 2024 10am – 12pm

*AFSI monthly meeting presentation and program beginning at 10am*

**WHO:** The Advocates for Senior Issues Members, Guests, and Sponsors

**WHAT:** An opportunity to advocate, learn, and grow together. There will be a continental breakfast so **be sure to arrive early and bring a guest!**

**WHEN:** April 19, 2024 10am-12pm

**WHERE:** Prince Conference Center  
at Calvin University  
1800 East Beltline Avenue  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

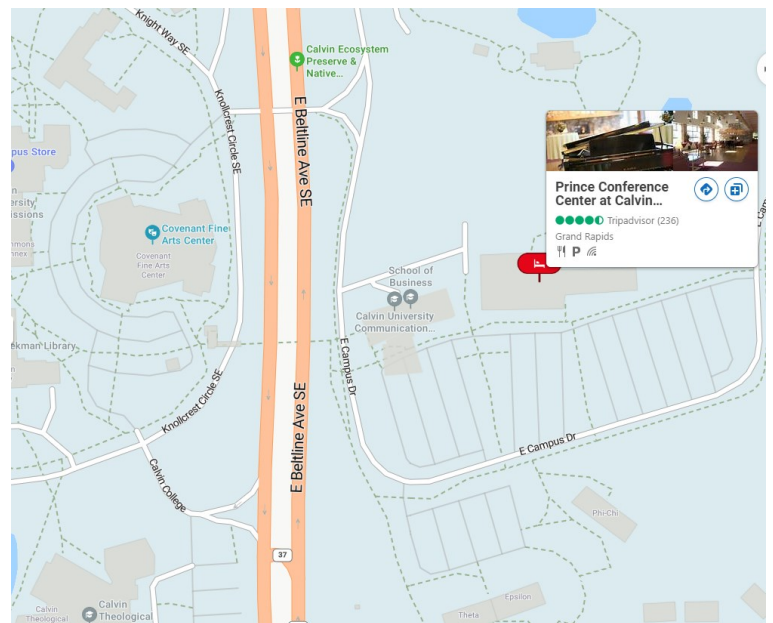
### Questions?

Please contact

AAAWM Advocacy & Planning Director

Sheri Harris

SheriH@aaawm.org | 616-222-7015



**PLEASE NOTE THE LOCATION OF THE MEETING  
HAS CHANGED FOR THIS MONTH**



# ADVOCATES for Senior Issues

## MEMBERSHIP MEETING

### WHEN

Friday, April 19, 2024 @ 10 am

### WHERE

Prince Conference Center  
1800 East Beltline Avenue Grand Rapids, MI 49546

### AGENDA

#### Call to Order and Announcements:

Lody Zwarenstejn, President

#### Legislative Presentation

##### Commissioner Stan Stek

Stan Stek graduated with a BA from Calvin University and then a JD from Valparaiso University. He practiced law as a commercial litigator for many years with the regional law firm of Miller Canfield. Over his legal career he represented many public and private entities in courts in and outside Michigan at every level up to the US Supreme Court and won several awards. Stan has served on the boards of dozens of governmental and non-governmental organizations across the Kent County. First elected to the Kent County Commission in 2014 and he has been reelected in 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022. Stan has served as the Vice Chair of the Board for three years and elected to serve as the Chair of the Board in 2022, 2023 and again in 2024.

#### Program Presentation

##### Erica Bolden

Line 5 Engagement Coordinator & Climate Justice Organizer

#### Michigan Climate Action Network:

This presentation will give you more insight on Line 5, Enbridges' past and current practices and where we currently are now in working toward a future without line 5 in our Great Lakes.

Advocates for Senior Issues is a non-partisan organization, affiliated with the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan

[www.aaawm.org/afsi](http://www.aaawm.org/afsi)

## SPONSORS



Beth Mans  
Senior Real Estate Specialist



Phil and Judy France

# Thank you to our Sponsors

## GOLD

Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM)

AARP | Beacon Hill | HAP Health Alliance Plan

Giving Back Realty | Beth Swagman | Blue Cross Blue Shield

Elders' Helpers | Reliance Community Care Partners

## SILVER

Life EMS | Pine Rest | Priority Health | Meijer Inc.

West Michigan Credit Union | Humana | Covenant Living

## BRONZE

Community Care Givers | Grand Rapids Elderly Care

Lody and Joanne Zwarenstejn | Parents Empowering Network

Care Resources PACE | The Village of Heather Hills

Health Motion Physical Therapy | Ofield Funeral Home

Leslie Sanford | Faith Hospice | OLLI at Aquinas College | Mika Meyers, Attorneys

## FRIEND

Bob Dunlap | Chris Becker Kent County Prosecutor

Beth Mans Greenridge Realty | Grand Rapids Savvy Senior Learning Series

Hulst Jepsen Physical Therapy | Safe Home Michigan | The Rapid

Joel Jason, CFP | Kelso Homes | Lacey Charboneau | Lois Carey

Phil and Judy France | Senior Neighbors | Tom Appel | Gauthier Family Home Care

Disability Advocates | Meals on Wheels Western Michigan | Holland Home

Renew Mobility | Sable Home Care

# Join us for

## OLDER MICHIGANIAN'S DAY

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2024**

**EVENT 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM  
WITH LUNCH FOLLOWING**

Join us for a special livestream or in-person event on the Capitol Lawn as we celebrate

*Powering Advocacy  
for 50 Years*



AREA AGENCIES ON AGING  
ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

- Would you like to participate in a very exciting advocacy opportunity right on the Capitol lawn in Lansing?
- Have you been looking for a chance to talk to legislators face to face?
- Are you looking for a meaningful and impactful spring outing?

**GET ON THE BUS!**




### **BUS TO LANSING**

We will be leaving AAAM at 8:30am and returning around 3:00pm  
*(don't worry, lunch will be provided)*

**Reserve your seat today as space is limited!**

**CONTACT DIRECTOR OF  
ADVOCACY, SHERI HARRIS**

 616-222-7015

 [SheriH@aaawm.org](mailto:SheriH@aaawm.org)

 3215 Eaglecrest Drive NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525

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## OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY

April 1, 2024

Dear Michigander,

As Senior Action Week and Older Michiganians Day approaches, we are reaching out to you to ask for your help to make sure your local State Representatives, State Senators, and the Governor hear from you on how their decisions impact critical services for older adults.

Part of our advocacy to help older adults during Senior Action Week includes a letter campaign which, with your support, can help send the message to legislators to preserve vital services for older adults in the state budget. Would you consider signing a letter of support for the funding of older adult services? Your voice matters!

Enclosed are two documents:

The *Platform for Legislative Action* explains critical issues on our advocacy platform to keep older adults independent and in their own homes. The second document is a letter addressed to our Michigan State Senate and House of Representatives for you to consider signing and sending back to us by April 15 in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. We will add your letter to hundreds of others and deliver them directly into the hands of local elected officials, visually showing lawmakers how many people care about these issues.

Please sign and print your name and the city, county, and zip code so we can deliver them to the appropriate legislator. Please feel free to add any comments, or a personal story, that you feel our elected officials should know on the back of the page. Comments are optional.

Thank you for taking the time to help. If you have any questions, please call AAAWM Advocacy Director Sheri Harris at (616) 222-7015 or via email at [Sherih@aaawm.org](mailto:Sherih@aaawm.org).

Sincerely,

Kendrick Heinlein  
President & CEO  
Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan



*The Source for Seniors*

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# 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.

*Powering Advocacy for 50 Years*



# PLATFORM FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

SENIOR ACTION WEEK: APRIL 29 - MAY 3, 2024  
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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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*Powering Advocacy for 50 Years*



## OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY

The Honorable  
Michigan State Senate  
PO Box 30036  
Lansing MI 48909-7536

The Honorable Governor  
Gretchen Whitmer  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

The Honorable  
House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Legislator:

As we approach Senior Action Week, April 29 - May 3, we are reaching out to ask for your support in the FY 24-25 budget. While COVID is not as much of an immediate health crisis as in past years, older adults still face many issues that impact their ability to stay independent in their homes as most want to do. The Area Agencies on Aging Association, aging network partners, and advocates for seniors across the state are urging legislators to **take action and ensure funding in the budget for critical supports and services in the following areas:**

- **Support and strengthen the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program** by adding 33 new full-time positions at an estimated total cost of **\$3 million** in the MDHHS budget.
- **Assist family and informal caregivers** by supporting a **permanent \$5 million appropriation** distributed to area agencies on aging (AAAs) so they can continue to develop Caregiver Resource Centers and pass the **Caring for MI Family Tax Credit** to provide tax relief of up to \$5,000 per year for family caregivers.
- **Expand access to the MI Choice Waiver program** by rebalancing state expenditures between Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and institutional care and supporting an **increase of the participant's asset limit** to reflect inflation.
- **Increase access to Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)** by supporting the Silver Key Coalition's request of a **\$7 million increase** for ACLS Bureau in-home services and making the **\$1 million increase** granted for home-delivered meals during the last fiscal year permanent.

We are grateful for your continued support and all that you do for older adults, especially with your help in addressing these important issues. For more details on Senior Action Week's platform of legislative action, visit [4ami.org](http://4ami.org) or call Kendrick Heinlein (616) 222-7018.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_ (County/Zip)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Print Name)

\*\*Additional comments on back



## OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY



Additional Comments (optional):

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