



Area Agency on Aging 1-B

THE ADVOCATE

June 2020

June 24th is Michigan Senior Action Day

Senior Advocates throughout the state are called to participate in a day of action to support senior services on Wednesday, June 24th as we work to secure adequate program funding for the state's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 & FY 2021 budgets. While the COVID-19 pandemic has put a massive strain on the state budget, it remains critically important that senior services are available to support older adults, who are at highest risk of COVID-19 complications, in their homes and communities.

On Senior Action Day advocates are urged to contact their elected officials and ask that they continue to fully fund critical senior services including the MI Choice Medicaid Waiver Program and the Aging and Adult Service Agency in-home care programs.

Join us in this effort by sharing this advocacy message on your social media, and calling or writing your local legislator. A sample letter to a legislator is included on page 3 of this edition of The Advocate. Sample letters and contact information for legislators in Region 1B can be found on our website:

<https://aaa1b.org/advocacy/contacting-your-elected-officials/>



Direct Care Workers to Receive Temporary Wage Increase

Direct care workers are essential to effective home and community based senior services. During the COVID-19 emergency they have continued providing care to Michigan seniors despite their own personal risk. In recognition of this work, in April Governor Whitmer authorized a \$2 per hour wage increase for direct care workers providing Medicaid-funded in-home care services in April, May, and June.

On June 17th the Legislature passed Senate Bill 690 which would extend the temporary \$2 per hour pay raise implemented by the Governor for Medicaid workers through the end of September. The bill also added a new \$2 per hour pay increase for direct care workers providing care to individuals in Aging and Adult Services Agency (AASA) in-home service programs from July through September. The Governor is expected to sign the bill into law.



The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a nonprofit agency serving the needs of older adults in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw counties.

Contact Katie Wendel, (248) 262-9232 or by e-mail at kwendel@aaa1b.org to join the Senior Advocacy Network or receive copies of AAA 1-B reports referenced in The Advocate.

Help Michigan Get Our Fair Share– Complete Your 2020 Census Today

Participating in the Census ensures our state and communities get their fair share of federal money for senior services, health care, education, food assistance and more. Census participation is a way to build and protect our political power and our civil rights.

If you have not yet completed the Census Survey we encourage you to please take 10 minutes out of your day today to fill out the census online at www.my2020census.gov or by phone at 844-330-2020. Please remind friends and family about the importance of completing the Census.

**You do not have to have your 12-digit Census ID to complete the Census for your household. You can click the link on the page under the Login button that says “If you do not have a Census ID, click here” and enter your home address.

For more information about the Census, visit www.2020census.gov or www.aaa1b.org/census-2020. You can check the Census participation rates for your community here: <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>. Response rates are updated daily.

Michigan is doing well with response rates, but there is still a ways to go to get a complete count (100%) of all of our residents. Here are some noteworthy stats regarding current (as of today) response rates nationally:

- Michigan currently ranks #4 among states with a 67.8% response rate
- Livingston County ranks #12 among counties with a 79.5% response rate
- Macomb County ranks #16 among counties with a 78.5% response rate
- Huntington Woods ranks #3 among cities with a 91.8% response rate
- Pleasant Ridge ranks #21 among cities with a 89.1% response rate

If you're interested in seeing more about the rankings, you can view those here: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/us.census.bureau#!/vizhome/2020CensusSelf-ResponseRankings/RankingsDashboard>

Sample Letter to Legislator for Senior Action Day on June 24th

Dear *Representative or Senator NAME*:

It is more important now than ever that Michigan seniors have continued access to effective in-home & community-based services to remain independent in their homes. **While persons age 60 and older comprise 24% of the Michigan population, they make up 34% of the MDHHS reported COVID-19 cases. Most tragically, persons 60 plus represent 84% of the pandemic deaths** reported according to Michigan Department of Health & Human Services. Michigan seniors remain at high risk of infection and death and face a much longer period of social isolation.

The aging network consists of more than 1,300 service providers that directly deliver an array of supports and services to more than 250,000 seniors and persons with disabilities annually across the state. Currently, service providers have been experiencing decreased revenue and increased costs, while also receiving increased requests for assistance.

The Area Agencies on Aging Association and our Aging Network Partners recommend that you:

- **Protect and hold harmless services to seniors and persons with disabilities in the FY 2020 and FY 2021 state budgets.**
- **Continue to support direct care workers both in the short-term for COVID-19 response efforts and in seeking longer-term permanent solutions to sustain wage increases.** We thank the legislature for your support of the temporary pay increase for direct care workers included in SB 690. Direct care workers are essential to effective in-home and community-based senior services. They have placed themselves and their families at risk in serving Michigan seniors during the pandemic and deserve our strongest support and gratitude.

Part of our strategy to re-engage the economy and transition beyond lockdowns must include adequate protections and care for vulnerable populations. We thank you for helping Michigan seniors during this pandemic and beyond.

Sincerely,

NAME
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