



Congress Passes COVID-19 Relief and FY 2021 Budget MI Legislature Extends Premium Pay for Direct Care Workers

In late December Congress passed a bill that included funding for COVID-19 relief and full-year funding for all federal programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.

The COVID-19 relief package included \$175 million for Older Americans Act Nutrition programs, \$100 million for elder abuse prevention, and funding for outreach to low-income Medicare beneficiaries. This is significantly less funding than what aging advocates were seeking, with no additional funding allocated for in-home supportive services.

In the FY 2021 budget most Older Americans Act (OAA) programs received modest increases.

- A \$2.5 million increase (less than 1 %) for Title III-B Supportive Services, which funds programs like in home personal care, homemaking and transportation
- A \$3 million increase (less than 1%) for Congregate Nutrition services
- A \$10 million increase (4%) for Home Delivered Meals
- A \$3 million increase (2%) for Family Caregiver Support
- A \$1 million increase (4%) for the Ombudsman Program

The Michigan Legislature passed a COVID-19 relief bill that included a \$22.7 million to extend the \$2.00 per hour wage increase for Direct Care Workers for two more months through February 28, 2021.

Kinship Care Bill Vetoed by Governor

House Bill (HB) 5443 would have created a Kinship Caregiver Advisory Council within the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) to study the needs of kinship caregivers, such as grandparents raising grandchildren, and provide recommendations to address unmet needs of this population. The Area Agency on Aging 1-B advocated in support of this legislation, which was passed by the legislature in 2020 with broad bipartisan support. HB 5443 was vetoed by Governor Whitmer because of concerns with a portion of the bill that would have given the Senate the authority to approve members of the Advisory Council.

A related bill, HB 5444, would have provided state support to a kinship care navigator program to assist kinship caregivers in connecting with services to meet their needs. While the Governor supported HB 5444, the bill was tie-barred with HB 5443, which means that they both needed to be signed by the Governor to become law.

Advocates will seek to have the bills reintroduced in the 2021-2022 legislative session.