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**Department of Aging - D26A07
FY 2018 Budget**

**Testimony of Rona E. Kramer, Secretary
Maryland Department of Aging**

**House Appropriations Committee, Health and Human Resources Subcommittee
February 22, 2017**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee, Health and Human Services Subcommittee
February 23, 2017**

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) analysis of the Maryland Department of Aging's FY 2018 budget request. The Department extends its appreciation to the DLS analyst, Jared Sussman, who thoroughly reviewed the budget and programs. The Department's response to the requests and the recommendation noted in the analysis are included below:

- 1. The Secretary should comment on when the [waitlist] data will be available and what steps the department is taking to ensure consistency across jurisdictions.**

Response

In reviewing FY 2016 waitlist data, multiple inconsistencies were identified in the enrollment of individuals on waitlists. To ensure accurate and useful data, the Department is hiring an employee to review programs and waitlists and to prepare and implement changes to modernize waitlist procedures. This position (PIN 050701), which has been recommended for deletion, will also be responsible for evaluating programs for their effectiveness and for improving quality and performance throughout Department programs.

2. MDOA should comment on how lower overall funding to AAAs affects their ability to serve seniors in the State and what changes need to be made to best serve the senior population.

Response

Maryland's older adult (60+) population is rapidly increasing and will rise to 25% of the state population by 2030. With stagnant federal funding, structural changes are necessary to prevent the major health incidents that precede nursing home admissions. This includes working closely with community partners including hospitals, health departments, and others to innovate. These efforts must include serving a greater profile of Maryland residents including those who are above the poverty level in order to ultimately reduce the number of individuals who will "spend down" into more costly Medicaid services.

While the Department is working diligently to identify sustainable measures to keep older adults healthy, MDoA is in the process of hiring an employee (PIN 002200) to lead these efforts although this position is recommended for deletion. In addition to the savings produced from new sustainable programs, the cost of one position is less than the cost to Medicaid of one admission to a nursing home.

Recommended Actions

DLS recommends abolishing 5.0 long-term vacant positions.

Response

The Department opposes the recommendation to delete five vacant positions. At the start of the current administration, the Department had a total of 70 employees. After the identification of numerous efficiencies and the transfer of one program to another Department, MDoA can function optimally with 42 regular positions. All of the vacant positions are currently in active recruitment stages. Each position is critical to actively maintaining the progress made over the last two years and to innovate to better serve the rapidly rising older adult population.

As noted above, the Department is committed to identifying successful programs to keep Marylanders healthy to avoid hospital admissions and Medicaid enrollment. If these positions are abolished, the Department will not be able establish sustainable programs. Abolishment of these positions may lead to higher Medicaid enrollments and increased State expenditures, well above the cost of the five positions.