

Article reprinted from June, 2013 Aging Alert

HOME-BASED CARE GETS MORE \$\$\$ FOR 2014

Those attending Older Michigianians Day on June 4 had three reasons to thank their legislators.

An appropriations bill heading towards the finish line contained a \$500,000 (6%) increase for senior nutrition and an \$18 million (6%) addition to MI Choice, a home-based alternative to nursing home care. The bill also includes a \$15 million (43%) boost to expand service in five existing PACE programs in metro Detroit, St. Joseph, Grand Rapids, Battle Creek and Muskegon. PACE is another nursing home alternative built around adult day care centers.

While the funding increases are heartening, aging advocates point to the big picture as evidence that more needs to be done. The \$500,000 for meals contrasts with the \$3.3 million cut in meals made during the recession of 2009-2011. The \$3 million cut from community services in the same period has not been restored. Community services include a variety of in-home supports as well as care management, information & assistance and services to help burned out caregivers. Waiting lists are common for both meals-on-wheels and community services.

Looking at Medicaid dollars budgeted for long term care (LTC) – only 38% are directed to home-based services, while 62% are directed to nursing homes. These proportions are moving in the right direction – in 2008, only one-fourth of Medicaid LTC dollars were devoted to home care. However, in Michigan it is still easier to access nursing home care than home-based care.

In contrast, some states have set a goal of providing more home-based options – and have found a way to do it. California, Texas, New Mexico, Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Minnesota all spend more than half of their public LTC dollars on home-based services. Most states are taking concrete steps to move in this direction. Some states go so far as to make it a policy that no one needing LTC will be forced to enter a nursing home when their preference is home care. The aging network would like to see the same policy here.

Advocates were pleased when Governor Snyder agreed to speak at Older Michigianians Day (OMD), and were also pleased to hear that aging issues are on his mind – so much so that he is considering a special message on aging for next year. They hope the message will include the first plank of the OMD platform since its inception – expansion of home-based services.