

Committee on Health

Chair, Yvette Alexander

Department of Health Care Finance

FY 2015 Budget Hearing

April 29, 2014

Good morning Councilmember Alexander and members of the Committee on Health. My name is Sally White. I am Executive Director of Iona Senior Services and Co-Chair of the DC Senior Advisory Coalition. I am here today to present testimony on the FY15 budget of the Department of Health Care Finance, particularly related to the EPD waiver and adult day health care services.

I and others are very concerned that DHCF is not planning to fill the vacant slots available to very needy older adults in the EPD waiver. Our understanding is that the District has been allotted 4,278 EPD Waiver slots. The most recent numbers we have show 1,354 vacancies, a vacancy rate of 32%. As written by the DHCF staff in response to questions from this committee for the oversight hearing DHCF has “monitored enrollment in the program over the past year and is confident that the enrollment has leveled off.” We implore DHCF to budget for and utilize all EPD waiver slots. The vacancies do not reflect a lack of need for the service. We know that there are many people in need of the service who are mired down in the very challenging enrollment process. **Individuals continue to wait as long as six months or more** before being served and vacancies in the program continue to grow.

I also wanted to speak for a moment **about funding for adult day health services**. As you may be aware, CMS required that the District discontinue payment for all day treatment programs, which includes adult day health care, using the State Plan methodology that has been in place for the last 30 or so years. Fortunately, there is an alternate methodology using a 1915(i) State Plan Amendment which should allow this vital service to continue for the very frail and vulnerable older DC residents served in our and other programs. Adult day programs such as Iona's Weinberg Wellness & Arts Center care for and engage people with memory loss, diabetes, stroke, Parkinson's and other chronic conditions, allowing them to continue living at home and delaying if not avoiding expensive nursing home care altogether.

It is unclear to us from the DHCF budget overview whether funding has been included in the FY15 budget for adult day health programs once the 1915(i) is approved. It is a small amount of the overall budget, but a very important piece for those older adults with significant memory loss and/or physical impairments who need this service to be able to continue living at home. We have not been able to enroll any new Medicaid clients in adult day health services in the District since January of 2013. As long as this restriction is in place, we all need to understand that frail older adults seeking support in the community may be placed in nursing homes rather than being able to continue living in the least restrictive environment of their own homes. And the FY15 budget needs to include funds to pay for adult day health care through the 1915(i) in FY15.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony before the Committee today.