

District of Columbia Office on Aging Performance Oversight
Before the District of Columbia City Council
Committee on Health
Chairperson Yvette Alexander
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Good morning Chairperson Alexander and Committee members. My name is Marla Lahat and I am Executive Director of Home Care Partners. Home Care Partners is a proud member of the D.C. Senior Advisory Coalition and the D.C. Coalition on Long Term Care. We are also one of the largest agencies within the DC Office on Aging's Senior Service Network. For over 50 years, Home Care Partners has provided supportive home care services through the use of certified home care aides who provide assistance with personal care, light housekeeping, meal preparation and shopping. Our home care clients, who often can thrive with only six to twelve hours of service per week have low to moderate incomes but do not qualify for Medicaid. Our clients also do not have the financial means to pay privately for the home care assistance they need to help them remain safely in their own homes and avoid more costly nursing home placement. The choice is obvious: DC nursing home costs can top \$100,000/year while Home Care Partners costs for the average client total only about \$10,000/ year. Of course, cost is only one of the many reasons that Seniors prefer to remain in their own homes.

I am pleased to be here today to offer brief comments about the performance of the DC Office on Aging during the last year. I wish to commend Executive Director, Dr John Thompson, and his staff. I believe that the staff at DCOA is committed to meeting the needs of D.C. Seniors and that Dr. Thompson has also been very responsive to the needs of the nonprofit agencies that make up the Senior Service Network that deliver many of the services that Seniors need and desire.

There were many positive changes during the past year. During FY 13, the reduction in funding that the DCOA nonprofit grantees experienced in FY12 was restored. In FY 14, additional funds were given to the grantee partners and although more is needed, it was certainly a good start. The waiting list for the meals program has been almost eliminated and the centralization of the WEHTS (now Seabury Connector) transportation services have been very beneficial. In addition, DCOA increased the allowable indirect rate on its grants to 10% in FY 13, a reasonable rate that allows agencies to more accurately reflect their overhead costs. Most importantly, in FY 14, the DC Office on Aging eliminated the very onerous match requirement that had previously been imposed on their nonprofit partners. These changes have made it easier for grantee agencies to continue providing the range and quality of services that our Seniors deserve.

As we move forward in FY 14, there are some changes that could further improve the services delivered to Seniors through the D.C. Office on Aging and its network partners. Communication within the network agencies and the DCOA staff could be expanded to introduce new staff and information in a timely manner, and resolve issues as they arise. In addition, communication regarding grantee payments could be enhanced. Home Care Partners, like many provider agencies, has several grant programs through DCOA which each require separate monthly invoices but our electronic payments from DCOA are often difficult to match up to the invoices we have submitted. Another very critical need is for an annual evaluation of the reimbursement rates paid to providers. The reimbursement rates for Senior Network services have not changed in several years. For Home Care Partners, an employer with over 100 DC employees that must comply with the DC Living Wage and associated living wage increases, a stagnant reimbursement rate means that our reimbursement rate lags behind the true cost of providing service. DCOA needs the funding to be able to maintain and expand services while also reimbursing providers at a rate that keeps pace with their increased costs.

As a member of the Senior Advisory Coalition, I wish to express my appreciation for your support of the D.C. Office on Aging and your recognition that supporting Seniors will not only make D.C.

an “Age Friendly City”, but will also make D.C. a better place to live for residents of all ages. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.