



**Testimony of Secretary Brian Duke, Department of Aging
before the
House Appropriations Committee
February 28, 2012**

Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek and distinguished Members of the House Appropriations Committee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present Governor Corbett's proposed Fiscal Year 12/13 budget for the Pennsylvania Department of Aging.

In my role as Secretary of Aging for the commonwealth, Governor Corbett has tasked me with upholding his commitment to protecting our growing senior population. The broad mission of the Department of Aging is to provide preventive and protective services for older Pennsylvanians and to enhance the quality of life of all older adults. Pennsylvania is currently home to over 2 million people over the age of 65, over 300,000 of whom are over the age of 85. This statistic ranks PA as the 4th oldest state in the nation. What may be even more significant is the anticipated growth in the population of those Pennsylvanians age 85 and older; growth by over 50,000 older adults by 2020, an increase of almost 17%.

The average person served by the Department of Aging is a woman, over the age of 80, who is widowed. The people we serve are usually of limited economic means but are not actively receiving public assistance either from Medicaid or other form of assistance through the Department of Public Welfare. The Department of Aging serves over 800,000 older adults on an annual basis.

The Department of Aging has a responsibility to promote and provide preventive services to older adults. These services are in place to keep people healthy and well and to provide the older adult with tools to practice personal responsibility and remain independent.

Our 52 Area Agencies on Aging serve as the front-door or as the first point of contact for an older adult and their family. It is through the AAAs that the commonwealth is able to respond to the needs of older adults at the local level and to provide the services to allow an older adult to live with dignity in an environment of their choosing. The federal Older Americans Act, enacted in 1965, requires states to establish a system to deliver a variety of in-home and community-based services. For example: Home Delivered Meals, Protective Services and Legal Assistance.

The Department of Aging receives no money from the General Fund to support these programs and services; our primary source of funding originates from the support promised and delivered to older Pennsylvanians through the Lottery Fund. Additional funding comes to the Department through the Tobacco Settlement Fund and federal funds.

As you may know, through the Office of Long-Term Living, in collaboration with the Department of Public Welfare, the Department serves an additional 17,000 individuals living with a disability who are under the age of 60. The Office of Long-Term Living, a joint deputate overseen by both Secretaries of the Department of Aging and the Department of Public Welfare, was formed to create more uniformity in the administration and to oversee Medicaid funded long-term living services. Managing these effectively requires a comprehensive, coordinated, coherent approach that encompasses developing and implementing policy and managing a budget that spans two agencies. The Departments continue to

collaborate and work together on a daily basis to identify the best way to meet these goals and ensure that older Pennsylvanians and persons living with disabilities can access the services they require in a setting which is consistent with their needs and preferences.

Governor Corbett additionally ensured that older adults were protected under his FY 12/13 budget proposal by maintaining the human services safety net. The Department of Aging's budget is a responsible, flat-funded budget. The Governor reminded us all that as stewards of the commonwealth's dollars, it is our role to make sure that resources provided are indeed used for the intended purpose to help those with the greatest economic and social need. We must remember, too, that there are those who may be eligible for services but have not yet accessed them. By protecting the safety net today, we are ensuring that resources will be available for those most in need in the future.

At the Department, we are currently in a strategic planning process which will define our direction moving forward. This process helps reaffirm a mission, establish common ground and sets a map before us to follow. Out of this process, a 4-year plan which will guide Pennsylvania as it continues to serve older Pennsylvanians and people living with disabilities. We will engage Pennsylvania, its providers both within and outside of the long-term care continuum, its aging network, its citizens, its academic institutions and others. As we look to the future, we must have a clear vision and strategic direction to guide our efforts. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to engage you and your constituent in this process.

There are three strategic directions of the state plan on aging: first, to ensure that Pennsylvanians will be able to age and live well and that communities will be designed as places to help them age and live well; second, to ensure that older Pennsylvanians have access to the appropriate services at the right time, with the right intensity and in the right setting; and, finally, promote the ways to bring the best of Pennsylvania to Pennsylvanians.

As we face these challenging economic times and are looking for ways to be innovative, I feel that it is the role of government to look outside of government and find ways to encourage partnerships with the private sector. Through the strategic planning process, the Department will be looking for ways to engage the private sector in order to more effectively leverage resources from foundations, communities and corporations. The Department intends to highlight best practices already in place and to build upon existing partnerships.

Through collaboration with other state agencies such as the Department of Community and Economic Development and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Authority, the Department of Aging will seek out ways to promote innovative economic opportunities to support seniors to allow them to remain in their homes. This can be demonstrated through the numerous aging in place models that are evident across the commonwealth.

In order to maintain the continuum of long-term care, it is crucial that the Department focus on the promotion of the full continuum of services available from in-home services to end of life care. Each sector, whether it is an Adult Day Center or a Skilled Nursing Facility, is necessary and strengthens our ability to meet the needs of the older adult. All must be valued and play a role in providing the right care, with the right intensity, in the right setting.

Pennsylvania is home to an array of both public and private institutions of higher learning and centers of research and innovation. I have had the opportunity to visit with some of the best and brightest professors and have been encouraged by the holistic approach that is being taken to address the long-term care needs of the older adult. The Department wants to ensure that their discoveries and innovative ideas are able to reach the most people and be able to have an impact.

I appreciate the support the Members of the General Assembly have provided to me over the past year and look forward to a continued collaboration with you. I ask that you would please contact me if I or any member of my Department can ever be a resource to you and to your constituents. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today to discuss the proposed budget of the Department of Aging.