

**Pennsylvania Senate Aging and Youth Committee
Pennsylvania House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee**

Testimony

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Good morning Chairman Hennessey, Chairman Samuelson, Chairwoman Brooks, Chairman Haywood and other distinguished members of the committees. My name is Holly Lange; I am the President and CEO for The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), the Area Agency on Aging for Philadelphia County. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the senior citizens of Philadelphia County. I am here to give voice to those senior citizens whose access to vital services has been negatively impacted by the recent changes in the enrollment process. These Aging Waiver services are essential to enabling these frail, vulnerable seniors to remain safely in their homes, and to supplement the care provided by so many unpaid caregivers.

I would like to begin by giving some background information. The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) was responsible for the enrollment process for consumers over the age of 60 until April 1st, 2016. Prior to the transition of enrollment for Aging Waiver services to the Independent Enrollment Broker (IEB) on that date, PCA worked very closely with consumers to support them through the enrollment process. Our highly trained, skilled social workers addressed challenges with literacy and language barriers and the difficulty of navigating a two-tiered application process, and were extremely successful with helping consumers to access these services. Close to 300 consumers were fully enrolled into the Aging Waiver Program on a monthly basis until the enrollment transition to the IEB. Since April 1, 2016 there has been a significant reduction in the number of successfully enrolled senior citizens, despite the fact that the number of referrals has remained constant.

The first part of my testimony is to call your attention to the significant gap between the number of consumers who have been referred to the IEB for enrollment in Aging Waiver services in Philadelphia County; and the number who have been successfully enrolled.

On average PCA's Assessment Unit completes at least 2,000 new assessments per month. Approximately one half of these assessments are appropriate referrals for Aging Waiver services. Beginning on April 1, 2016 we followed the newly established, required referral process to the IEB for consumers over age 60. From April 1, 2016 thru September 30, 2016 our Assessment Unit referred 5,727 consumers for services. But as of October 7, only 1,160 were fully enrolled. This is extremely troublesome because it represents only about 20 % of the referrals. We do not know what happened with the other 80% of the consumers we referred. Our concern is that these consumers were unable to navigate this complex process because they no longer had the support which was in place previously. These are frail, medically compromised, and functionally disabled senior citizens who desperately need these services.

The second part of my testimony will provide a few examples of the kinds of challenges senior citizens have encountered since the switch to the IEB was made in April.

Although PCA and other Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) no longer have a role with enrolling senior citizens into the Aging Waiver program, they and their families continue to look to us for answers and for help with getting the home and community based care they need to live with the safety and dignity they deserve. As a result, PCA has found it necessary to continue to provide enrollment assistance to this vulnerable senior population through our help center.

PCA now receives calls on a daily basis requesting assistance with obtaining the Medical Certification form which is required for this process. Previously, PCA and other AAAs provided this form and assisted consumers with getting it completed. This is a key step in the enrollment process, which cannot move forward without this medical certification. Because it is so crucial, PCA is continuing to provide support where possible, although we are no longer responsible for, or paid for this.

Consumers call our offices regularly, frustrated by delays. Many consumers who were referred for enrollment four months ago are still waiting to be processed. More than 4,500 referrals have not been reconciled. This means that 4,500 seniors who are entitled to, and need services, are not receiving them; and have no idea when they will receive services.

Caregivers for consumers who are waiting for services have told us that they have taken leave from their jobs to care for the consumer until services can start. Many have been waiting for three or four months and have heard nothing from the IEB. Many are on unpaid leave. This is an inexcusable burden for both consumers and caregivers to have to bear, to be unable to access the services for which they are eligible and which save the Commonwealth millions of dollars.

Some callers have reported their frustration with submitting paperwork and learning later from the IEB that there is no record. Other callers have reported that the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging was not offered as a choice for Service Coordination although PCA has provided Waiver services since 1995.

We understand that changes occur. We have been involved with system changes many, many times. Prior to this change, Area Agencies on Aging met the enrollment requirements, and supported the consumer and caregiver in gaining access to these services. We understand that this has been found to be a potential conflict of interest. However, the system that is now in place is failing to provide the promised service, and as a result access to these vital services has decreased dramatically.

My final comments are recommendations:

- The senior citizens in Philadelphia who are applying for home and community based care should be afforded the necessary support to allow them to fully access these crucial services.
- If one of the solutions to providing this support is to use the local ADRC, sufficient staffing and funding for both travel and translations should be assured to meet the volume and demand in Philadelphia County.
- There should be a report on the number of applicants who have been denied or suspended, including the reason or disposition for each case, since the IEB has been the enrollment broker for the Aging Waiver. This report should be provided to DHS, PDA and AAAs now, and going forward, on a monthly basis.

Respectfully Submitted

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