



June 11, 2025

Committee on Executive Administration and Labor, Council of DC

Makeda Vanderpuije, Executive Director, LeadingAge DC

Re: Proposed FY 26 Budget for the Department of Aging and Community Living

Thank you to Director Hines, the staff of DACL, and Chairperson Bonds, for your leadership and continued support and for this opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Makeda Vanderpuije and I am the Executive Director of [LeadingAge DC](#), representing mission-driven organizations serving older adults across the District, including affordable housing, Senior Villages, and home and community-based services. I am also a District resident and an active member of the District of Columbia Coalition on Long Term Care's Workforce Development Committee.

The mayor's proposed FY26 budget reflects ever tightening budget constraints and difficult decisions about where to direct finite resources. We applaud the full continuation of funding to important programs like community dining, home-delivered meal services, and supportive residential services. Regrettably, it falls short of the undeniable demographic imperativeⁱ to make investments in the aging services workforce and systems. We urge the Council to dig deep and employ creative solutions to ensure stable and sustainable funding that meets the needs of our growing population of older adults and safeguards the providers and caregivers that empower elders to age with dignity.

As an advocate for organizations across the aging continuum of care, my role is to ensure the voices of our hardworking providers are heard. Through home and community -based services and programs,



LeadingAge DC members bridge the gaps between public safety net supports and individual resources, especially in cases where residents are aging in place without family support. Providers receiving grants and other funding from DACL support elders in the District to obtain nutritious food, combat social isolation, access transportation resources and remain safe, connected, and healthy while aging in place. Care management and caregiver support opportunities are critical to ensuring households with vulnerable adults can remain stable and thrive. These organizations are on the front lines, facing increasing threats to their sustainability and very survival. Supporting them now is crucial to strengthening their ability to meet the profound demographic shifts our city and communities are already experiencing.

Senior Villages act as a first line of defense against contextual threats to the wellbeing of older adult residents. By staying connected to the community, elders have avoided inpatient readmissions, addressed harassment due to medical billing errors, facilitated transportation to critical medical appointments, accessed life-sustaining medications, and intervened early to address signs of distress, isolation, or unmet needs in neighbors. The Village model has evolved to include an ever-broader range of supportive services, such as caregiver respite, support for solo agers, vaccination clinics, medical and financial advocacy, and is generating life-changing impacts on housing, healthcare utilization, transportation access, and more. This expansion has allowed Villages to serve a larger number of older adults in DC, including an increased proportion of low-income residents across all Wards. And as the proportion of older adult residents in the District continues to grow, DC Villages continue to explore strategies to sustainably and equitably meet emerging needs across geographic and socio-economic populations.



The \$692,000 proposed FY26 funding is not sufficient to sustain existing Village operations and will not allow for the anticipated creation of new Villages. Consequently, Villages may be required to reduce the services offered, decrease the number of low-income seniors who receive subsidized memberships, or potentially close altogether. We are recommending that, at a minimum, the funding for Villages be restored to the FY24 level of \$748,000. Ideally, the additional \$350,000 provided in FY25 will also be restored for FY26, ensuring a robust continuation and expansion of the critical work that Villages do to empower older adults aging in place in the District.

The current moment demands immediate, coordinated intervention and improved communication with and between educational institutions, training providers, consumers, family members, advocates, community organizations, long term care providers, and government agencies –who together should be supported in ensuring a sustainable workforce and a robust plan that meets the needs of our intergenerational communities. A whole-of-government approach would be strengthened by the creation of a Long-Term Care Coordinator who is empowered to align the efforts of various District agencies that influence care quality and workforce development, and responsible for results.

LeadingAge DC and the Coalition look forward to working with DACL to take a more proactive and assertive stance in advocating for residents who are aging in place. We are ready and willing to support our District and care continuum partners in realizing a future where all DC residents can age well and thrive.

I welcome any questions that you may have.



ⁱ In just a year, the oldest Baby Boomers will begin to turn 80, an age when the need for assistance with tasks of daily living significantly increases. Our District's older adult population (65+) is projected to increase by nearly 25% by 2030. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the population aged 85 and older will nearly double by 2035 and almost triple by 2060. We cannot ignore this rising tide of need.