

District of Columbia City Council
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
D.C. Department of Aging & Community Living FY 26 Budget Hearing
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Good morning Chairperson Bonds. My name is Marla Lahat and I am Executive Director of Home Care Partners. Home Care Partners is a nonprofit home care agency that has supported older persons in D.C. since 1957 and is a proud member of the DACL Senior Service Network, Leading Age DC and the DC Coalition on Long Term Care. Home Care Partners provides three services through generous funding from the D.C. Department of Aging and Community Living that are help older adults remain in their homes: The Homemaker home care aide program that provides home health aides to older DC residents who do not qualify for Medicare or Medicaid home care; the DC Caregivers Institute that provides support to unpaid family caregivers who are caring for their parents, spouses or other loved ones; and the Safe at Home program that provides OT assessments, home modifications and other fall reduction activities such as Fall Prevention Awareness week, exercise and balance classes, and fall prevention and recovery presentations. Home Care Partners would like to extend our deep appreciation to Director Charon P.W. Hines and the staff of the Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL) for its steadfast leadership and commitment to supporting older adults, especially in the face of a tight and challenging budget year.

We are grateful for the continued funding of Home Care Partners' three core programs in the FY 26 budget—the Homemaker Program, the DC Caregivers Institute, and the Safe at Home Program. These services all play a vital role in ensuring that older DC residents can remain safely and independently in their homes. While the funding for Homemaker is mostly local DC funding with a small percentage of federal funding, our DC Caregivers Institute is funded 100% through federal Older Americans Act funds. We are hopeful this funding will continue although there are many uncertainties. This program is more critical than ever as family caregivers return to the office and

experience increased stress from their caregiving responsibilities. The Safe at Home program is fully funded by DC and we are especially appreciative of the increase of \$300,000 that is budgeted for Safe at Home for FY 26. We welcome the opportunity to meet with DACL leadership in the coming months to share ideas about how to maximize the impact of Safe at Home funds to serve as many people as possible with available funds during FY 26.

We also want to urge the Council and DACL to ensure stable, ongoing funding for DC Villages—grassroots, neighborhood-based programs that rely heavily on volunteers to provide essential services and social connection to seniors. The Villages are a valuable partner to Home Care Partners and many others in the aging network by providing referrals and volunteer services for those in their neighborhoods. Home Care Partners frequently refers to the Villages to provide additional support for clients in our programs. They are a crucial and very cost-effective component of the community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in place.

Finally, we encourage DACL to continue participating in Age-Friendly DC to the greatest degree possible, and in ongoing efforts to coordinate and strengthen the city's direct care workforce, as was highlighted during the March roundtable with the Committee on Health. A skilled and stable direct care workforce of home health aides and CNAs is essential to meeting the needs of the District's growing aging population and to meeting the ambitious goals outlined in Age Friendly D.C.

Thank you to Director Hines, the staff of DACL, and to you, Chairperson Bonds, for your leadership and continued support and for this opportunity to submit testimony. . We recognize that this is a difficult budget environment, but we urge the Council to ensure that programs and services supporting District seniors are protected across all relevant agencies. Local DC funding is more critical than ever amidst the uncertainty at the Federal level and possible cuts to programs Seniors depend on. We look forward to continuing our partnership and shared mission of supporting DC's older adults, and the dedicated family members and workforce who care for them.