



**AREA AGENCIES ON AGING ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN**  
**ASSOCIATE MEMBER NEWS**  
**Week of March 7, 2011**

*"Don't cut our programs!"* . . . was the mantra of one group after another testifying before the House Community Health Subcommittee in the State Capitol on Monday. Chairman Matt Lori (R-Constantine) listened to all of the testimony along with Reps. Peter MacGregor and Joan Bauer. Subcommittee members Reps. Robert Genetski and Rashida Tlaib attended a good portion of the all-day hearing. Rep. David Agema is also on the subcommittee but was not present.

That message was driven home by the aging network, represented by Area Agency on Aging 3-C Coordinator Laura Sutter, Area Agency on Aging I-B Planning Director Jim McGuire, I-B Advisory Council member Bob Fox, and Mary Ablan, Director of the AAA Association. The aging network's volunteer programs were also there in force. Representatives of Kalamazoo County's programs testified, bolstered by the moral support of several dozen senior volunteers seated in the audience.

Laura Sutter told lawmakers the stories of Betty and Diana, older adults in Sturgis and Coldwater who are able to stay in their own homes thanks to OSA-funded services. In Diana's own words, "I don't have family; these caregivers are my family, without these programs I couldn't stay at home. And, furthermore, I'm sure there are places for cuts, but this is NOT one of them." Sutter noted that many older Michigianians are living "on the edge," and any additional cuts will have "serious implications."

Jim McGuire testified in support of the Governor's benchmark of expanding the OSA Community Living Program. The program is the result of a federal demonstration grant from the Administration on Aging, focused on serving older adults cost-effectively in their own homes and diverting them from institutions and Medicaid. The Governor is proposing to expand that program so that it is operating statewide in 2012, but McGuire pointed out that goal will be stymied if OSA programs are cut by 9%.

Bob Fox testified against the OSA cuts, saying the 9% cut resets state funding back to the 1998 level while the senior population has increased by over 300,000. He shared his analysis comparing Michigan with other Great Lake States on non-Medicaid state expenditures per senior 60+, showing Michigan ranking second from last at \$14.34/senior. Other states' rankings -- Ohio (\$3.35); Indiana (\$30.04); Minnesota (\$35.99), Pennsylvania (\$84.58) and Illinois (\$123.85).

Mary Ablan opposed the Governor's suggested budget cuts for home-based care, specifically OSA services, Home Help and the Michigan Quality Community Care Council. Pointing out that 'nursing homes are an important part of the long term care system,' she noted that the majority of older adults prefer to receive supports in their own homes and more funding is needed for these options, not less.

*Next Tuesday in Lansing* . . . AARP is sponsoring an "It's Not Fair" rally on the East Steps of the State Capitol from 11 am to 1 pm, protesting the Governor's proposal to raise taxes on seniors.