

Testimony for Hearing of Committee on Deficit Reduction

March 10, 2009

Written Testimony of Alternatives for the Older Adult

Moline, Illinois

Thank you for consideration of comments on the difficult decisions that the legislature faces when they address the current State budget crises. Controlling costs and setting priorities is a necessity in tight budget years. Many of the State's expenditures are crucial to provide basic services to Illinois' citizens. Based on 25 years experience in providing aging services at Alternatives for the Older Adult, our organization is deeply concerned about the continuation of high priority services to frail older adults. We encourage the protection of key II Department on Aging programs that safe-guard the health and welfare of vulnerable older adults. Alternatives recommends that the following programs be priorities and continued at recommended service levels:

- Protective Services for Elder Abuse and Neglect - Elder Abuse is a growing but often hidden problem of vulnerable older adults. Elder victims are beaten, burned, neglected, financially exploited, confined and even killed. It is essential to maintain the program that provides investigation, interventions and coordinates with law enforcement to alleviate elder abuse and neglect in the community.
- Comprehensive Care Coordination and Community Care Programs assists older adults who have disabilities which limit their activities of daily living, to remain at home. Because of these services, older adults with limited abilities can avoid the costly option of institutionalization. Comprehensive Care Coordination provides evaluations to access all services and benefit programs to assist them and then develops and monitors appropriate and cost effective care plans. Community Care Homemaker, Emergency Response and Day Treatment assist with daily care needs. For these frail older adults, a cut in any of these services would most likely mean individuals would have to enter the nursing home under Medicaid.
- Ombudsman Program provides advocates to resolve the complaints of nursing home residents and to assure residents' rights in licensed care facilities
- Home Delivered Meals meet the basic meal preparation needs of many homebound elders.

The above mentioned programs compose an essential community based network to support vulnerable older individuals in Illinois.

The setting of priorities and control of costs may not be adequate to balance the budget. In this recession, there are limited means to raise revenues to meet the costs of essential services. It seems apparent that one of the few viable State revenue options is a fair income tax increase that will allow the State to meet its budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Karen Freda CEO Alternatives for the Older Adult