



JB Pritzker, Governor
Paula A. Basta, M.Div., Director

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April 14, 2022

Dear Aging Network:

As I write this letter from my hotel room in New Orleans, I'm looking forward to presenting with Sandy Pastore on building a secure labor force: navigating a place for gerontology in K-12 schools at the American Society on Aging's national conference. I've had the pleasure of seeing many familiar faces from our Aging Network in New Orleans this week, and the privilege of learning from and connecting with some of our nation's leaders in the aging field. It feels extra special to be together in person at On Aging 2022 after two years of virtual events.

On a related note, I wanted to mention that the Department is partnering with a national team of experts along with our sister agencies to develop strategies to address direct workforce recruitment and retention, which is a real concern in this landscape of remote work and increased competition across the workforce.

Back in Illinois, the General Assembly has wrapped up their spring session—a jam-packed abbreviated schedule to allow time for lawmakers to campaign in their newly redrawn districts ahead of the June 28 primary election.

The General Assembly adjourned in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 9 (3 a.m. in the Senate and 6 a.m. in the House!) In total, 402 bills passed both chambers and will go to the Governor for final approval (227 House bills and 175 Senate bills). A number of these bills affect the Department, the Aging Network, and older Illinoisans.

One that has garnered significant interest is [House Bill 246](#), which addresses nursing home rate reform. Negotiators have been meeting for more than a year to bring this package across the finish line, which includes increased funding tied to evidence-based staffing levels, direct subsidies for a new CNA pay scale, and funding for demonstrating improvement on key quality measures. In a [statement](#), Governor Pritzker said the passage of House Bill 246 will mean improved care for 45,000 vulnerable seniors in nursing homes across the state.

For more information, please reference this [fact sheet](#) from our friends at HFS. Also, if you clicked on the [ilga.gov](#) link above, do not be misled by the short description of "landscape architects." It's a fairly common practice to amend bills with new language as they move through the legislative process.

I'm also pleased to share with you that the FY 23 budget was passed in [House Bill 900](#) and the budget implementation plan, or BIMP bill, in [House Bill 4700](#). Our budget was the same as what was [introduced by the Governor](#) in February. This included the in-home rate increase at \$0.70/hour, which will bring the rate from \$24.96 to \$25.66, beginning January 1, 2023. It also included an increase of \$14.2 million for home-delivered meals, as well as an increase of \$4 million to our Area Agencies on Aging to strengthen support services for unpaid family caregivers in Illinois. According to Governor Pritzker, [we've achieved our state's strongest fiscal position in generations](#), and that's good news for our budget and our Aging Network!

One other measure I wanted to briefly highlight is [Senate Bill 3490](#), an initiative of AARP Illinois, AIDS Foundation Chicago, Center on Halsted, Equality Illinois, Howard Brown Health, Pride Action Tank, and SAGE. This legislation includes three parts, which are based on findings from an October 2021 report from AARP Illinois and SAGE, [Disrupting Disparities: Solutions for LGBTQ Illinoisans Age 50+](#).

1. Establishes, to our knowledge, the first-in-the-nation LGBTQ Older Adult Advocate within a state government,
2. Requires state-funded providers (all of you!) to complete LGBTQ older adult awareness and competency training, and
3. Creates the three-year Illinois Commission on LGBTQ Aging.

I know many of you have already completed SAGECare's LGBT aging training, and I thank you for that! As an LGBTQ older adult myself, this legislation is especially meaningful to me, and I hope it will sustain my legacy far beyond my tenure with the Department.

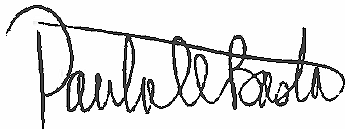
If you have specific questions about these or any other pieces of legislation, please reach out to the Department's legislative liaison Katherine Ostrowski at Katherine.Ostrowski@Illinois.gov.

That the spring session is over for lawmakers is just another sign that this year is flying by! May is Older Americans Month, and the 2022 theme is *Age My Way*, an opportunity for all of us to explore the many ways older adults can remain in and be involved with their communities. ACL has a ton of resources available, including [article and proclamation templates](#), [social media graphics](#), and [activity ideas](#), to help you celebrate Older Americans Month in your community. If your organization is planning an activity and would like to be featured on IDoA's social media channels, please send the content along to our Public Information Officer Iris Schweier at Iris.Schweier@Illinois.gov. Upcoming events, compelling stories, cool videos, etc. are all great! You can simply send the links on social for Iris to share and retweet.

In closing, I leave you with a reminder for ourselves and those we serve: please talk to your doctor about getting boosted! The CDC is recommending a fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or second booster dose (if you got Moderna or Pfizer for your first shots) for certain immunocompromised individuals and people over the age of 50. To get the word out to older adults, we are working on some informational materials with IDPH and are in the process of scheduling a tele-town hall with AARP, with more details to come soon.

As always, thank you for everything you do! Please continue to stay safe and well.

Sincerely,



Paula Basta, M.Div.
Director, Illinois Department on Aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the **Senior HelpLine at (800) 252-8966; (888) 206-1327 (TTY)**

