



News from the Senior Agenda Coalition of RI

October 22, 2024

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## Proposed State Budget Cuts Would Harm Rhode Island Older Adults

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### Senior Agenda Coalition Urges Governor McKee to Reject Them

**October 22, 2024,** The Senior Agenda Coalition of RI is alarmed by onerous budget cuts proposed by state agencies that would seriously impact state programs providing assistance to the state's growing population of older adults and adults with disabilities. The proposals from Medicaid and the Office of Healthy Aging are included in budget requests for constrained budgets sent to the state Office of Management and Budget for consideration as they work with the Governor's Office to develop the state budget for fiscal year 2026.

“It is unconscionable that at a time when our older population is growing – projected to reach one out of every four Rhode Islanders in a few years -- to propose budget cuts for programs proven to keep them healthy and safe and that in the long term can save taxpayers money,” said Diane Santos, Senior Agenda Coalition Board Chair. The requests put forward by the Office of Healthy Aging include a reduction in state funds for the Meals on Wheels home-delivered meals program projected to cause 13,000 fewer meals delivered to persons unable to shop and prepare meals; a 45% cut in funding for local senior centers and programs for older adults; elimination of grants to provide security services in elderly housing; and decreased funding to support the Elderly Transportation program.

Proposed changes in Medicaid eligibility guidelines are projected to cause hundreds of vulnerable older adults and persons with disabilities to lose Medicaid coverage for their nursing home care and cause nursing homes, many which are already struggling financially and face critical worker shortages, to lose millions of dollars if implemented. In addition, changes in the Medicaid CNOM (Costs Not Otherwise Matchable) program could reduce federal dollars that match state funding and impact hundreds of persons receiving home care and adult day services that help keep them living at home.

Maureen Maigret, Policy Advisor for the Senior Agenda Coalition said, “the proposed cuts could result in greater spending in other areas. For example, Brown University researchers have shown

that funds spent on home-delivered meals can delay or even prevent costly nursing home care.” Maigret noted that the Senior Agenda Coalition has worked hard for years to boost state funding to communities to assist them to operate local senior centers and programs. These serve hundreds of older adults and families across the state with a wide range of programs that keep older adults healthy, informed and connected to their communities, she stated. “The Coalition has been working toward the goal of providing ten dollars for each person age 65 and over to each of our communities. This amounts to about \$20 per older adult. We have been making progress toward that goal. However, the proposed cuts would bring us back to the state funding level we were at five years ago despite the increased need for these services due to the significant growth of our older population since 2019.”

Senior Agenda Coalition of RI Executive Director Carol Anne Costa, said, “SACRI has sounded the alarm and has mobilized its coalition. We have written and hand delivered today a letter signed by many coalition partners to Governor McKee urging him to reject these onerous proposed budget cuts, as the potential ripple impact on families will be significant. We will continue to monitor the budget process and collaborate with our many partners to be in a strong position to advocate to thwart these deep cuts.”

**Coalition partners to date on this initiative:**

Age Friendly RI  
The Village Common of RI  
Office of the RI State Ombudsman  
RI Association of Senior Center Directors  
Advocates for Better HealthCare  
Ocean State Center for Independent Living  
West Bay Community Action Program  
RI Organizing Project

**About SACRI** – The Senior Agenda Coalition is an independent and diverse coalition of agency and individual members. Our Mission is to mobilize people to implement an agenda that improves the quality of life of all older Rhode Islanders and adults with disabilities. We accomplish this through community organizing, public education advocacy and legislative action.

Visit our [website](#) for more information.

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