

**House Appropriations Committee
Pennsylvania Department of Aging**

**Written Testimony of
Secretary Jason Kavulich
March 10, 2026**

Introduction

Chairman Harris, Chairman Struzzi, and members of the House Appropriations Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the importance and impact of Governor Shapiro's proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget for the Department of Aging.

Governor Shapiro's proposed budget reflects the Administration's unwavering commitment to support and invest in older Pennsylvanians by ensuring effective and efficient delivery of aging programs and services. The Administration is proposing an increased investment in the Department of Aging to further strengthen the aging services infrastructure and expand the Department's ability to monitor, increase data reporting efficiencies, and ensure quality service delivery to Pennsylvania's growing older adult population. These investments also support the Department's ongoing work to implement our 10-year strategic roadmap called ***Aging Our Way, PA*** and our ability to implement the modernization of the Older Adults Protective Services Act.

Delivering for Older Adults

In May 2024, Pennsylvania launched its 10-year multi-sector plan for older adults after a year of intensive work following Governor Shapiro's signing of Executive Order 2023-09, directing the Department of Aging to lead the project. Designed with the input of more than 20,000 Commonwealth residents and stakeholders, including both the Senate and House Aging Committees, ***Aging Our Way, PA*** is a commitment to creating a future in which we all have the resources we need to age with dignity and continue to be vital, active members of our communities for the entirety of our lives.

The Department – together with our state agency partners, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and local communities – is delivering on this plan. To help address the needs of Pennsylvania's growing number of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, PDA launched the PA Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Legal Line, a first-of-its-kind free legal service staffed by attorneys at SeniorLAW Center, offering legal information, advice and referrals for older caregivers who need support in custody or other legal areas involving kinship care.

To further support caregivers, the Department developed and launched the PA CareKit to provide resources to all types of caregivers, including spouses, children, siblings, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, and grandparents raising grandchildren. The PA CareKit is a collection of tools, information, and resources to address key challenges in the caregiver journey. It offers caregivers an array of person-centered support options, including personalized and tailored resource guides, practical solutions, and connections to organizations to help address their unique situations. National organizations that advocate for older adults including the National Alliance for Caregivers, the National Academy for State Health Policy and Advancing States, as well as caregivers and families are praising this "personalized" and

“easy-to-use” resource. With the distribution of nearly 2.4 million printed materials to almost 1,400 community locations, printed materials from the PA CareKit can be found across the Commonwealth at community libraries, the 52 AAAs, and Senior Community Centers (SCCs). We have also provided these materials to all members of the General Assembly to share with their constituents.

Delivering on another key tactic in ***Aging Our Way, PA***, PDA launched a national partnership to increase awareness of and participation in Pennsylvania’s senior community centers. Data from 2024 shows that only 2% of older Pennsylvanians, on average, participated in SCC programs¹. The opportunity to ensure that SCCs are an integral place of connection and a source for activities and nutritious meals, rests on reshaping the public’s perceptions and lessening barriers to SCC access. The project – in collaboration with the National Center to Reframe Aging (NCRA), a leading organization dedicated to ending ageism in America – focuses on reframing communications for the Commonwealth’s 450 SCCs and broadening public awareness of the services they provide and their value to older Pennsylvanians.

In addition to the work of ***Aging Our Way, PA***, the Department has acted to increase accountability for the local agencies responsible for protecting and serving older adults, and improve transparency regarding their performance. The monitoring of these Area Agencies on Aging -- or AAAs – is through what is called the Comprehensive Aging Performance Evaluation (CAPE) monitoring system, a historic advancement in oversight and quality improvement under the Shapiro Administration. CAPE is a completely new, innovative tool designed to improve services and supports for older adults through improved data review; and for the first time in the Department’s history, transparency and accountability of the AAA network. Instead of AAA performance being evaluated across multiple disconnected reviews, our team now evaluates an AAA’s performance during a coordinated review – offering a more holistic snapshot of how the AAAs are performing. Under this Administration, the public can now view information about an AAA’s performance on our website, including areas like investigative activities related to suspected elder abuse or helping older adults at home with tasks of daily living. Currently, there are 20 AAA’s CAPE results posted on the Department’s website spanning 30 counties. CAPE is also how the Department will track improvement in the overall ***quality*** of work performed by the AAAs.

Governor’s 2026-2027 Budget Proposal: Thoughtful Investment and Much-Needed Reform

Governor Shapiro’s proposed budget for 2026-27 builds on three years of success with more than \$6 million in additional investments in the Department of Aging. This proposal would provide continued investments in ***Aging Our Way, PA***, CAPE, and calls for the prioritization of updating the Older Adults Protective Services Act (OAPSA).

Aging Our Way, PA

Governor Shapiro has proposed an additional \$3 million investment to support the implementation of ***Aging Our Way, PA***. This funding will help the Department advance the plan’s five high-level priorities, guiding strategies, and targeted tactics that describe in great detail how we are improving aging services in the Commonwealth. In Year 3 of implementation, the Department will continue to collaborate across state agencies and engage stakeholders to support our critical caregivers, implement projects that help

¹ Reframing Communications about Senior Community Centers, Phase 1 Brief: Mapping the Terrain, National Center to Reframe Aging for the Department of Aging, September 2025

us reframe the way we think and talk about aging in the commonwealth, and expand work to ensure older adults can live with the independence they crave and dignity they deserve.

During Year 2 of implementation, the Department completed a comprehensive evaluation of the PA Link program and developed a strategic plan to modernize and strengthen it. PA Link strives to create a seamless experience where no one is left behind in accessing critical resources, especially those with complex needs who often fall through the cracks of traditional service systems. The goals of this program redesign focus on strengthening leadership, partnerships, and internal infrastructure to create a more coordinated and capable PA Link network. By increasing public awareness and improving access, individuals and families will be able to more easily find the PA Link and use its supportive services. Building on this work, PDA will continue to coordinate, train, and educate the statewide network of service providers who help older adults understand their options and develop plans that support their needs and goals.

Comprehensive Aging Performance Evaluation

The oversight responsibilities of this Department continue to grow as demand increases for services delivered by AAAs to the older adult population. The Comprehensive Aging Performance Evaluation has moved the previous monitoring structure from a siloed program approach to a more holistic philosophy, where each AAA is evaluated for performance in OPTIONS, Caregiver Support Program, Fiscal, and Older Adult Protective Services during a singular monitoring review.

The 2026-27 budget proposes additional investments in PDA to conduct and innovate CAPE. This investment will ensure that the Department has the resources to identify performance gaps for every community and address those gaps with the necessary technical assistance and training materials AAAs need to improve their practice. This funding will allow the Department to expand the scope of CAPE and monitor additional aspects of a AAA's operations and service delivery, as well as modernize data collection for more accurate and precise reporting.

Older Adults Protective Services Act (OAPSA)

Governor Shapiro is calling for long-overdue updates to the Older Adults Protective Services Act, or OAPSA, as reports of suspected abuse of older adults have increased by 84% over the past five years, particularly financial exploitation.² The Governor's 2026-27 proposal calls for legislative changes to the Act that include:

- Recognizing financial exploitation as abuse;
- Expanding background check requirements for caregivers;
- Creating a waiver process for determining employment eligibility;
- Updating outdated lists of criminal offenses;
- Expanding mandatory reporting practices;
- Creating older adult fatality review teams to identify gaps in the system in the event that abuse results in death.

² [Older Adult Protective Services Annual Report - Fiscal Year 2024-2025](#)

Throughout the last two years, PDA participated in several informational hearings held by the PA Senate and House and met with both caucuses and stakeholders. The Department has highlighted the continued impact of financial exploitation, abuse and neglect to older adults, and discussed the changes needed to better protect and modernize the Act. PDA remains eager to collaborate with the legislature to update OAPSA and improve protections to safeguard the rights of older adults while providing for the detection, reduction, correction or elimination of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and abandonment.

We appreciate your support and dedication to Pennsylvania's more than 3.4 million older adults. This proposed budget will support and enhance services for older Pennsylvanians in your district and across the Commonwealth.