JANUARY 18, 2011

TESTIMONY OF CATHERINE EDWARDS, PhD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

TO

MISSOURI SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Mister Chairman, members of the Committee and guests - good morning/afternoon.

My name is Catherine Edwards. I serve as the Executive Director of the Missouri Association of Area Agencies. Collectively, we represent the 10 Area Agencies on Aging that exist throughout Missouri, providing services in every geographic region of the state.

Our public face is best known by the Senior Centers that we maintain in each senate district in this state. But, our responsibility, as established by amendments to the Older Americans Act in 1973, goes much deeper.

The Area Agencies on Aging represent the front line in providing vital services, programs and information to over a million Missourians and their caregivers, including, home-delivered meals, in-home services, disease prevention and health promotion, transportation, public benefits counseling (like Medicare), and legal services.

What you do here in the capitol ---the decisions you make on funding--- help us carry out our mission. We are very efficient in the way we administer our funds and we do our best to get a lot of bang for the bucks that we receive. But, because we are so efficient in making every dollar count – every dollar lost has a magnified impact. And that impact is felt by the seniors in our state who rely on the availability of our services.

Our program mix is wide and varied, but I want to focus now on the meals and nutrition programs run by the Area Agencies on Aging. These include both the home delivered meals programs and the congregate meal programs provided by our over 200 senior centers.

In FY 2010 state funding for these programs was cut by just over $1.4 million, with the promise from the General Assembly to restore those cuts. But, last year, the General Assembly did not do so. When this cut occurred federal stimulus dollars filled the gap. Moreover, the area agencies took several measures to protect the meals for seniors---- they cut staff, cut other services such as transportation or legal services, increased local fundraising---all to protect this core program.
Still and all----the cuts were felt and had a significant impact on Missouri’s seniors and communities.

For instance, in Northwest Missouri, $90,000 was cut from the home delivered meals program alone, which translates into 16,500 meals.

In Southwest Missouri – the Springfield area – one center (Crane) was forced to close completely, removing that resource to about 50 seniors; the number of meals per week available to some clients had to be cut back in order to avoid a complete loss of service and 150 employees region-wide were forced to take a 3 day furlough just to preserve meal dollars. The area agency cut supportive service programs (transportation, legal, etc.)by 5% to have additional meal dollars.

The Mid- East AAA had to close a center in Gerald, Missouri---and another in St. Ann. That area agency has seen a decrease in numbers of meals both congregate and home delivered, 14,563 in FY 2009 and 52,587 in FY 2010.

In St. Louis City we were forced to cut 6 meal delivery days out of the calendar for all clients, developed a six month backlog of people needing home delivered meal services; reduced services in all other programs to save food dollars – and project that we will have to do the same this coming year unless something changes.

In Northeast Missouri we capped salaries for all paid employees and one contractor is delivering meals three days a week instead of 5. Also in FY 10 funding cuts contributed to the closing of a satellite site in Jonesburg and in 2011 we may lose one or two more satellites.

In Southeast Missouri, the area agency has been forced to deny requests from town leaders of Bloomfield, Altenburg, Wappapello, Advance, and Piedmont for funding to start/operate Senior Centers. There are underserved areas in our farthest rural communities in the Ozark foothills. And the agency is unable to allow 2 meals/day to be served to an individual, even if their health/situation dictates the vital need. Even here in mid Missouri – in Columbia and the state capitol - total meals served were down by 100,000 during 2010.

What does a senior do when their center closes, or meals are delivered only 3 days instead of 5----they have to eat----well they don’t get heat then because they use the money for food, or they don’t buy their medicine because they use the money for food, or they can’t get their eyeglasses…..they can’t fix that leak in the roof…..they take the 3 days’ worth of meals and try to stretch them into six days’ worth---in other words, they cut their rations.

All of this falls hard on seniors and aggravates their existing health conditions, in some cases, resulting in premature nursing home placement --- at a much higher cost to the state than just supporting the meal program would have been.
Senators---often we hear talk of cutting fat in the state budget----but, there is no fat here--we are at the bone.

The people we serve are Missouri’s seniors---people who worked hard all their lives, raised families and now, as they age, find their dollars don’t stretch as far as they need to--in many cases, now, they are simply poor, on fixed incomes or infirm---or just need the help while they are recuperating from surgery or hospitalization.

When the Older Americans Act established the nutrition (meals) program, it was because America’s seniors were living in poverty and going hungry. Over the past 5 decades the program has helped to turn that around----but we have to remain watchful and not slip back---9% of Missouri’s seniors live in poverty---the median income is about $27,000. The meals program helps people live independently for as long as they can by keeping them strong-- and that goal becomes more difficult every time we ratchet back on our ability to serve them.

We ask that you make no further cuts in this year’s budget for senior programs, and if at all possible, that last year’s cuts be restored since no stimulus monies or federal funds will be available this year to offset any cuts.

We do a good job in administering these monies – and have for more than 35 years. Missouri’s seniors have kept faith with us ---please help us to continue to keep faith with them and help them live safely and soundly in the communities they love.

Thank you.
APPENDICES

1. ABOUT MA4
2. FUNDING SOURCE CHART
3. MA4 CONTACT INFORMATION
Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging

*Service. Information. Advocacy.*

The Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging (MA4) was founded in 1973 to serve as a statewide advocate and resource for older Missourians. MA4 is comprised of the state’s 10 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), which were created under the 1973 amendments to the Older American’s Act of 1965. For more than 35 years, these local agencies have been providing vital services, programs and information to millions of Missourians and their caregivers, including legal services, home-delivered meals, disease prevention and health promotion, transportation, public benefits counseling, senior centers and in-home services. The 10 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) provide a coordinated network of care in implementing statewide initiatives, which are designed to help older Missourians maintain their independence and give them a voice in articulating their concerns and changing needs.

As the official statewide association of these agencies, MA4 is dedicated to carrying out its mission of service, information and advocacy to improve the lives of older Missourians and to plan for the changes that will take place as the aging population grows in number and importance in the next decade.

Visit our website at: www.ma4web.org
This chart indicates the downward trend in funding that has occurred over the past few years. Although there was a spike in temporary funding during the past year due to stimulus money, the federal portion projected for the coming fiscal year has remained flat, state funding has dropped, and temporary funding has almost disappeared. This funding pattern exists despite the increased demand for services and costs associated with the direct provision of services.
APPENDIX 3
MA4 CONTACT INFORMATION

MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING
JANUARY 18, 2011

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Counties served: Atchison, Nodaway, Worth, Harrison, Putnam, Holt, Andrew, Gentry, Buchanan, Dekalb, Clinton, Davies, Caldwell, Grundy, Livingston, Sullivan, Linn, Mercer

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Phone: 660.665.4682
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Counties served: Adair, Clark, Knox, Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Randolph, Schuyler, Scotland, Shelby, Warren

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Counties served: Carroll, Chariton, Lafayette, Saline, Johnson, Pettis, Bates, Henry, Vernon, St. Clair, Cedar, Benton, Hickory

Central MO AAA
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Counties served: Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Camden, Cole, Cooper, Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Howard, Laclede, Maries, Miller, Morgan, Moniteau, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski, Washington

Mid-East MO AAA
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Counties served: St. Charles, St. Louis County, Franklin, Jefferson

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Counties served: Barry, Christian, Dade, Dallas, Douglas, Greene, Howell, Lawrence, Oregon, Ozark, Polk Shannon, Stone, Taney, Texas, Webster, and Wright

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Counties served: St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, Perry, Iron, Reynolds, Madison, Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Wayne, Carter, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, Scott, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscott, Dunklin

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Counties served: Barton, Jasper, Newton, McDonald  

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