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January 4, 2018

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## **MA4 Releases 2018 Legislative Priorities For Missouri Seniors**

**Jefferson City, Mo.** - As the new Missouri legislative session begins in Jefferson City, the Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging (MA4) has released a set of legislative priorities for the coming year designed to protect and assist Missouri's senior population. MA4 represents the ten Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) in Missouri.

MA4 and its members have endorsed the following five legislative priorities for 2018:

- Support legislation creating the Senior Growth and Development Fund Support full funding for senior programs administered by the Area Agencies on Aging
- Support restoration of full funding for the MORx prescription drug program for seniors
- Defend the "Circuit Breaker" program that provides tax credits for low income renters and seniors
- Support revenue enhancement strategies within the Missouri State Budget

"During the 2017 Missouri legislative session, many senior programs faced significant funding cuts with legislators pointing to a lack of sufficient revenue," said Catherine Edwards, Executive Director of MA4. "This year, we hope to articulate how funding senior health, nutrition and independent living strategies can actually save the state money in the long run; how we can be a constructive part of that budget debate; and why it is important to consider our seniors as a top priority when legislators make important funding choices", added Edwards. "It is also the case that a budget is really a statement of priorities and ma4 strongly urges the General Assembly to place Missouri's seniors at the top of that priority list," Edwards continued. "That is why MA4 supports bipartisan revenue enhancement legislation."

During the 2017 session, legislation that would have created the Senior Growth and Development Fund by apportioning a percentage of an insurance premium tax already being collected to senior services unanimously passed out of committee in the Senate. This year, similar legislation (SB 694) has been pre-filed by Senator Wayne Wallingford (R) – Cape Girardeau. Representative Galen Higdon has filed the bill in the House as HB 1906. MA4 supports the legislation in its current form.

MA4 is also supporting full funding for the various programs administered throughout the state by the Area Agencies on Aging. These programs have proven to be cost efficient for Missouri taxpayers when seniors can remain healthy in independent living situations. Many of these programs are accessed by Missouri seniors through the extensive network of senior centers located in each Missouri county and through outreach efforts of the agencies. Programs include nutrition and meals, independent living resources, transportation and health related programs. These programs have seen erosion in funding since 2008, and are estimated to have lost \$17.9 million in overall funding during that same time frame.

Two other priorities, the MORx prescription drug assistance program and the Circuit Breaker tax credit for renters are both targeted to help low-income seniors. Despite the fact that these individuals are among the most vulnerable in our population, both programs faced drastic cuts or outright elimination during the 2017 legislative session. MA4 is advocating for the restoration of MORx for eligible seniors who receive Medicare only as was the case previously. Last session 60,000 seniors lost this pharmacy assistance. MA4 will continue to work to protect the Circuit Breaker tax credit for senior homeowners and renters who qualify. “Let’s not have a repeat of last year’s session which sought to balance the budget by cutting critical programs for Missouri’s most vulnerable citizens. We can do better than that”, said Edwards.

For more information, contact Catherine Edwards at [cedwards@ma4web.org](mailto:cedwards@ma4web.org).

### **About The Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging (MA4)**

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 45 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 center services and activities 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.

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