

- 1. Medicare – The 2019 Medicare Trustee’s report states that Part A is projected to be depleted by 2026. Since Medicare is financed by payroll taxes (36%), beneficiary premiums (15%) and general revenues (43%), it is linked to the deficit and is at risk of benefit reductions and/or increased beneficiary costs.**

KCASI sent letters to Senators Stabenow and Peters and Congressman Upton voicing our concern for reducing or eliminating payroll taxes. The President signed an executive order that individuals could voluntarily not pay the taxes until the end of the year, at which time they would need to be paid retroactively. President Trump also indicated that he was in favor of completely eliminating payroll taxes in the future.

- 2. Social Security – Projections put the social security program bankrupt by 2037, however, reasonable changes made early will put the program on sustainable footing without benefit reductions.**

See Number 1 for KCASI’s advocacy regarding payroll taxes, which also support Social Security.

- 3. Direct Care Professionals –Support policies that improve the recruitment/retention of direct care professionals through increased pay, training, and recognition in order to address the crisis of not enough workers to help elders and people with disabilities.**

KCASI sent letters and made phone calls to state and federal legislators on this issue. Due to the first COVID-19 relief package to the states, direct care worker pay was increased by \$2.00 per hour through February 28, 2021.

A letter was sent to Sen. Peters supporting the draft “Nursing Home COVID-19 Protection & Prevention Act” that included money for direct care worker pay and increased staffing; purchasing personal protective equipment; and help with strategies to reduce the spread of the virus in long-term care facilities.

- 4. Elder/Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention – Support legislation to increase penalties for elder/vulnerable adult abuse along with policies that provide better tools for professionals and the public to identify**

abuse and prosecute perpetrators, especially regarding financial exploitation.

KCASI supported State House Bills 4254-4260 and 4265 that passed the House but died in the Senate. We also supported State Senate Bill 464 regarding rules governing banks and credit unions with regard to financial exploitation, which was signed into law 12/30/2020.

Kinship Caregiver Support – Grandparents and other relatives who are raising children need coordinated support at the state and local level, which House Bill 5443 and 5444 provide.

HB5443 was vetoed by the Governor. HB5444, the Kinship Caregiver Navigator Act, was approved and signed by the Governor. This bill requires adherence to federal rules regarding navigator programs and the state contracting with a third party to implement the program.

- 5. Affordable Housing – Support legislation, policies, and programs that increase the availability of affordable housing for older adults. This includes advocating for a county-wide Home Sharing Program (matching owner with renter who provides an agreed upon financial and/or chore/household assistance).**

KCASI continued with a task force who monitored local affordable housing initiatives. We directly inquired about senior millage funding for the home sharing program and were told it didn't meet the current criteria. KCASI offered a program on the Homes for All millage, which passed in November.

Other issues and advocacy:

- Aging in Community Policies/Funding –** KCASI advocated through phone calls and emails with state legislators on the June 24 Senior Day of Action to not reduce funding for aging programs and services in the state budget. We also advocated with federal legislators to pass a bill to help fund state and local governments whose resources drastically declined due to COVID-19, while also encouraging them to support home and community-based service funding.

- **Health & Safety** – KCASI encouraged the State Capitol Commission and/or State Legislators to ban weapons in the state capitol. No action was taken in 2020 but open carry weapons were banned by the Commission 1/11/21.
- **Increasing Government Transparency** – KCASI attended a virtual Kalamazoo County Commission meeting to request more information and transparency with regard to the Kalamazoo County Senior Millage, which was passed in 2018. Commissioners were receptive to the requests, indicating transparency was important for all millages.
- **Election** – KCASI sent questions related to our issues to county commission, state, and federal legislative candidates for elected office to help members determine whom to vote for. Answers were compiled, put on the website, and sent to members.