



The Council for Health and
Human Service Ministries

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
#BeAVoiceCHHSM

BE A VOICE SUMMARY: SERVICES TO OLDER ADULTS

All Be A Voice Health and Human Service Advocacy Toolkit sections are on the advocacy page listed on the bottom of this summary.

BACKGROUND:

- For the first time in human history, older adults are projected to outnumber children. Yet negative biases, stereotypes, and judgments about older adults are pervasive. The history of services to older adults reveals a pattern of placing care responsibilities on families and religious and charitable organizations, creating a patchwork method of meeting these needs.
- In addition to Social Security and Medicare, another essential piece of legislation, especially for low-income older adults, is the Older Americans Act (OAA). Created in 1965 as a response to the lack of community services, it continues to be a major vehicle for the delivery of social and nutrition services to older adults and their caregivers.
- Many CHHSM organizations provide affordable housing for older adults; however, only 35 affordable rental homes exist for every 100 extremely low-income renter households, and 26 percent of those extremely low-income renters are older adults. CHHSM housing ministries collaborate with community partners to advocate for policy changes.

CURRENTLY:

- The inadequate supports for older adults are glaringly apparent in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although everyone is susceptible to the disease, older adults are at highest risk for negative outcomes. Robust steps are needed to protect and provide services to older adults. Additionally, the pandemic has illustrated the existing health disparities for communities of color, who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in horrifying ways. The Black mortality rate is 3.57 times the white mortality rate, and the Navajo Nation's infection rate is the highest in the country. Elected officials need to be in conversation with and listen to communities of color, and collaborate with Black, Latinx, Asian, and Native American medical associations to identify experts of color who are addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES:

- Medicare is an important program for older Americans but many older adults cannot pay for supplementary health care insurance to cover the costs not covered by traditional Medicare. In what ways will you make sure that everyone is able to have access to healthcare, including long term care and prescription drug coverage?
- The current Social Security benefit is woefully inadequate, even though a large percentage of older Americans rely on it for the majority of their income, causing them to delay needed health care, skip medications and meals, and have poor living conditions. What will you do to increase Social Security, in a way that is equitable to women, caregivers, low-income communities and Black and Latinx beneficiaries?
- COVID-19 has made it clear that our care facilities and nursing homes need to be prioritized. In what ways will you make sure that both residents and care takers are provided with the care and safety needed?