

**Joint Hearing of the Ways and Means Committees
 Testimony Submitted on the FY10 Budget
 March 20, 2009**



The Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging and Senior Center Directors (MCOA) is fully aware of the fiscal constraints faced by the Commonwealth and the nation. During FY09 the Governor was forced to ‘9c’ Line Item 9110-9002 – Local Aid to municipal Councils on Aging both in October and January, thereby decreasing our appropriation by nearly 12.5%. As you are well aware, these mid -year cuts coupled with the dramatic reductions in other local-aid line items have resulted in many services being scaled back or eliminated at the municipal level. We realize that tough choices will also be necessary to establish a FY2010 Budget.

Though the future looks bleak, we were heartened with House 1, the Governor’s proposed FY10 Budget. In his budget proposal the Governor fully restores the FY09 9c cuts and returns the allocation to the FY09 GAA level.

House 1- Governor Patrick’s FY10 Budget proposal Source: <http://www.mass.gov/bb/h1/fy10h1/brec10/act/h91109002.htm>

<i>ACCOUNT</i>	<i>Description</i>	FY2009 GAA	FY2010 House 1
9110-9002	Grants to Councils on Aging For grants to the councils on aging and for grants to or contracts with non-public entities which are consortia or associations of councils on aging	8,615,068	8,615,068

Through the recent testimony submitted by Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the administration recognizes the vital role COAs play in our communities:

“Councils on Aging (COAs) continue to be an essential part of the continuum of care, offering a variety of services and programs to elders living in the community. COAs maintain their strong community connection to seniors by providing meals to local elders, assisting with transportation, and offering volunteer opportunities and counseling services. In addition they offer activities that help reduce social isolation, enhance social and civic engagement, foster independence and promote healthy lifestyles. The initial 2009 budget would have increased the formula grant amount per elder from \$6.50 to \$7.00. However, during the January 9c process, the line was reduced to the FY08 level of \$6.50 per elder. This reduction was with a “one-time” perspective, as our FY10 budget restores the \$7.00 per elder number for the upcoming fiscal year to each Council on Aging.

We ask for your support of the Governor’s proposed FY10 budget for funding of municipal Councils on Aging in Line Item #9110-9002 (Local Aid). We feel fortunate that during these economic times, the Governor recognizes the role of Councils on Aging and chose to fund this line item at \$7.00/elder/YEAR. Municipal COAs will face significant cuts as our Commonwealth’s cities and towns try to balance their budgets with reduced local aid and the decline of other revenues. Setting the formula grant at \$7/elder/YEAR will provide some basic relief. Most of these Formula Grants fund or augment critical staffing positions at the local level such as Outreach Workers who link seniors to basic services and benefits. Any reductions to the Formula Grant will result in further layoffs and potential senior center closures at a time when the growth in the elder population has been significant.

MCOA’s membership voted at its September 19, 2008 meeting and reaffirmed this position at our February 20, 2009 meeting to seek level funding of this line item in FY2010. We asked that the House set line item #9110-9002 at \$8,615,068.

