



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL ON AGING**  
2025 Legislative Priorities

*The Washington State Council on Aging (WScOA), a unified voice across Washington, is a unique advocacy group in the arena of issues affecting older adults. WScOA is charged with advising the Governor, the DSHS Secretary and the State Unit on Aging (RCW 43.20A.695), offering an insight and statewide perspective on matters concerning older adults and people with disabilities.*

*The aging demographic continues its rapid growth. By 2030 all of the Baby Boomers statewide will be age 65 or older and make up 20% of our state's population. The growth in the numbers of older adults is straining the programs that serve them. Social isolation, the loss of food security, and rising housing costs are all approaching crisis levels for many older adults. Continued investment today can preserve programs that have immense value to the future of our state – a future where older people live more productive lives with a modest amount of help.*

During the 2025 Legislative Session WScOA will emphasize the following priority issues:

***Issue-Food Security: Older Adults Face a “Perfect Storm” of Hunger.*** Area Agency on Aging nutrition programs provide critical food in the form of hot meals at community sites and senior centers, take-away food through food pantries, and support Home Delivered Meals (Meals on Wheels) programs, and other nutrition services. They face a significant loss of nutrition funding, at a time when costs are increasing. Major additional funding is needed to prevent increasing food insecurity/hunger and the terrible Hobsons choice so many older adults must make: Buy food? Pay the rent? Or fill prescriptions?

***Issue-Case Management Ratio: Support the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) request for funds to reduce Area Agency on Aging and DSHS Home and Community Services case management ratio.*** By SFY25 AAAs will support over 4,500 clients who do not have a paid in-home caregiver. With insufficient paid caregivers in the workforce, clients may wait for months before getting care. AAA case managers need the capacity to visit more often and spend more time with clients who do not have in-home assistance.

***Issue-Continue the work of the JLEC: WScOA strongly supports continuing the work of the Joint Legislative Executive Committee on Planning for Aging and Disability Issues.*** The JLEC has a proven record of bringing issues affecting older adults to the attention of the legislature for action. As the Age Wave continues to grow, the issues our state will continue to face in the future require a dedicated group of thought-leaders paying close attention to the critical matters of the day. WScOA urges that a budget proviso be created and passed to allow the work of this body to continue.

## ***Ongoing issues –***

- ***Social Isolation. WSCoA encourages the legislature and leadership of the State to continue critical work toward mitigating and preventing the negative aspects of social isolation on older adults in our state.*** Social isolation has been proven to increase health risks of heart attack, stroke and diabetes for older adults, particularly those with intersections of race and poverty. But the crisis continues as a number of older adults remain socially isolated. Additionally, the previous norm of having easy and in-person access to such activities as medical services, educational facilities, and social/family relationships has been altered. More and more we need to assure capacity is available to assist older adults utilize growing remote and technology-assisted services. We must assure that adequate, affordable and reliable *Broadband Internet* is available to all residents throughout our state.
- ***Senior Center support.*** Senior centers continue to offer critical social infrastructure for older adults. In addition, centers provide many other important services, with facilities acting as environmental (heating and cooling) facilities during inclement weather; as vaccination locations; and in aiding older adults through food distribution. The State of Washington has little information about the network of Centers in the state. We continue to ask the legislature to sponsor a statewide comprehensive study of senior centers, what they do and the support they need.
- ***Support AL TSA request legislation and funding needs.*** Inherent in the work of the WSCoA is remaining attuned to and supporting the important work of AL TSA, including working on a path toward a multi-sector plan for aging, WA Cares implementation/operation and more.
- ***Support the work of the Dementia Action Collaborative (DAC)*** and support the rollout of the renewed Washington State Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias.
- ***Support use of age inclusive language.*** Whether it be in newspaper headlines, legislation, or academic studies, negative stereotypes about older adults are present in writing and everyday speech. Eliminating bias in language in particular about older adults is important because there is evidence suggesting that biased language evokes negative stereotypes, which have the power to impact policy, group attitudes and the health of older adults.