**Ombudsman Advocacy Talking Points**

Ombudsman

* The Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsmen are a neutral third party who work with residents of licensed long-term care facilities with a goal of improving care and quality for residents and advocating for the resident's wishes.
* There are state and local ombudsmen.
  + State ombudsmen are responsible for statewide program administration, oversight of local ombudsmen and volunteers, and collaboration with each state’s unit on aging.
  + Local Ombudsmen are responsible for responding to complaints and following up with the state if necessary.
* Ombudsmen advocate on behalf of residents of licensed long-term care facilities such as nursing homes (NH), homes for the aged (HFA), and adult foster care (AFC) homes.
* The Ombudsman Program is authorized by the Older Americans Act and is funded by state and federal Older Americans Act funding. Some programs also use local funding or additional funding supported by their Area Agency on Aging.
* In FY23, Ombudsmen fielded 3,401 complaints – 90% of which came from nursing facilities.
* Michigan ranks 51st among 53 programs in the ratio of staff-to-bed equaling one ombudsman per every 5,150 beds. The nationally recommended minimum staff-to-bed ratio is one ombudsman per every 2,000 beds.
* Michigan needs to add 33 more full-time ombudsmen to reach the recommended minimum staff-to-bed ratio of 1:2,000 beds.
* Even if Michigan achieved the recommended minimum staff-to-bed ratio of 1:2000 beds, it would only increase our ranking to 29th.
* Michigan has the third-highest number of facilities and 8th highest number of beds.
* In FY21, the average expenditure per bed in Michigan was $19.47. Nationally, the average expenditure per bed in FY21 was $49.47 meaning in Michigan, the same resident of a long-term care facility received $30 less than the average older adult in another State.
* In FY22, there were only 11 ombudsman volunteers totaling 460 hours which is less than .25 FTEs. According to FY19 data, only 8 states had equal to or less than 11 volunteers supporting the ombudsman program. On the high end, NC had 907 certified volunteer ombudsmen.
* The current service standard for the Ombudsman Program is that all facilities should be visited quarterly. With the current number of facilities, that would require each current ombudsman to visit 4 facilities each day of the calendar year.
* Compared to the rest of the states in Region 5 – Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin – Michigan has the greatest number of facilities and one of the fewest numbers of staff.

Data Points

* 20 local Ombudsman (17 full-time, 3 part-time) addressing complaints (FY23)
* 4,610 facilities in MI (FY23)
  + 439 nursing homes
  + 334 HFAs
  + 3,837 AFCs
* 103,549 resident beds in MI (FY23)
* 3,401 complaints investigated in MI (FY23)
* 1:5,177 staff-to-bed ratio (FY23)
* $2,155,362 – Michigan program expenditures (FY21)
* $19.47 is the average fund allocation per bed in Michigan while the national average is $49.47 (FY21)

Funding Formula

* The funding formula used to distribute Ombudsman funding has not been updated since 1987.
* The funding formula used to distribute ombudsman funding throughout the state is separate from the Interstate Funding Formula that is used to distribute all other Older Americans Act funding.
* The current Ombudsman Funding Formula is 1xNursing Home Beds in region, 1xNursing Homes in region, .5xSq. Miles, 1xMedicaid Beds in region, and a base of $5,000.
* The current funding formula doesn’t include data on Homes for the Aged and Adult Foster Care Homes even though Ombudsman are tasked with responding to complaints from these residents.
* The Commission on Services to the Aging can, through a directive in the Older Americans Act, update the Ombudsman Funding Formula with current data.
* Advocates desire to include a hold harmless provision so that no region receives less ombudsman funding than they currently receive as the Ombudsman Program overserves no region.

Ask

* Adequately staff Michigan’s Long Term Care Ombudsman Program by adding 33 new Ombudsmen at an estimated total cost of $3 million.
* Direct the Commission on Services to the Aging to update the Ombudsman Funding Formula to distribute increased funds more adequately.
* Update the Ombudsman Service Standard to remove quarterly visit requirements.