December 8, 2016

The Honorable Muriel E. Bowser  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

ANC3B strongly supports effective services for seniors in our neighborhood and around the city and we greatly appreciate your commitment to making the District an Age Friendly City. Ward 3 has the highest percentage of senior residents of any ward in the city, at an estimated 16.4% in the latest DCOA figures. Our older residents have a complicated set of needs for transportation, nutrition, housing, and medical care as well as help connecting to a variety of types of services, and those needs are growing as our residents age. We urge you to increase funding for case management and transportation services for seniors back to at least FY2016 levels and preferably more, in order to meet urgent needs of our most vulnerable residents. We also recommend boosting spending for senior nutrition services and affordable housing in the FY2018 budget.

One of the greatest unmet needs for seniors is for case management to help the individuals and their families assess their full range of needs and identify ways to address them. Any senior who lives in the District is eligible to receive case management services from the lead agency funded by DCOA in his or her area, at no charge, but there are still many individuals and families who are not able to get those services because of insufficient funding of budget shortfalls. The senior “villages” around the District, including the Glover Park Village, provide invaluable services to seniors; however, our senior villages cannot provide licensed social workers so they must be able to refer seniors to the lead agencies for vital case management services.

In the FY2017 budget, the city reduced support for case management by $208,000, even as needs are growing. Iona Senior Services, the lead agency for Ward 3, had to eliminate one case manager position from its staff, which means 35 individuals and their families will not get those services this year, or have to wait to be helped. We understand that the city encouraged lead agencies to become licensed Medicaid providers so Medicaid funds could substitute for city funding for case management for low-income residents. So far, however, none of the lead agencies have been approved as Medicaid providers. In the mean time, seniors in need of case management are going without services, and waiting lists are growing.

Seabury Resources for Aging provides the “connector” senior transportation services for the city, and Seabury also transports home-delivered meals for seniors around the city. In FY2017 funds were cut for
the Seabury Connector services by about 10%, from $6.1 million down to $5.5 million, at a time that demand for the services is increasing and the Connector vehicles are aging and in need of replacement.

For nutrition, even in a city and area known for its high median income, many residents including seniors and people with disabilities are not getting the food they need and do not have the funds or mobility to be able to get adequate nutrition. Almost 5% of the city’s senior residents are facing hunger, according to a 2016 report from the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger, which places the District with the 4th highest hunger rate among all the states in the United States.

For housing, the number of affordable units available in the city continues to fall far short of demand and the need for units well suited to seniors is especially acute, particularly as those who have been living independently in single family homes are looking for smaller homes or apartments that are safe, accessible and affordable. The current administration has committed to devote $100 million from the Housing Trust Fund to constructing new affordable housing, and we hope that commitment continues.

Our ANC considered this matter at our regular December meeting. As the DC Senior Advisory Council has also recommended, we voted unanimously to advise you and DCOA that as a Commission, we strongly urge you to include in the FY2018 District budget:

- Increased DCOA funding for case management, which is the most critical need for many senior residents and their families, in order to provide at least the level of support as in FY2016;
- Specific DCOA funding for additional social work case managers east of the river in the lowest income areas of the District as well as at Vida Senior Center, which is the only community-based service provider in the city that is focused entirely on the needs of Latino residents;
- Increased funding for senior transportation services, including Connector services that Seabury Resources for Aging has been providing, to allow added service and replacement of aging vehicles;
- Continued coordination between Connector services and Transport DC, and support for pilots and other initiatives that address unmet transportation and related customer service needs of low-income older adult populations in the District, including seniors with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency;
- Additional funds for home-delivered meals for seniors through DHCF; and
- A continued commitment to provide $100 million annually for affordable housing, including specific funds from the Housing Trust Fund to create affordable housing geared to seniors.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jackie Blumenthal
Chairman

This letter was approved by a vote of 5-0 at a duly noticed public meeting of the Commission on December 8, 2016, at which a quorum was present. A quorum is 3 of the 5 Commissioners. The Commission vote also designated that the Commissioners of ANC3B01 or ANC3B04 may represent the Commission on this matter.