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**Testimony for
Philadelphia Corporation for Aging**

**Public Hearing on
Meeting the Needs of Philadelphia's Elderly**

May 26, 2010

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Introduction

Founded in 1977, CARIE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for frail older adults. Our focus of concern spans the long term care continuum from those who are homebound to those who are institutionalized. Older adults who experience physical frailty or psychological impairment frequently have difficulty advocating for their needs and are often a silent group. We work to protect their rights and promote awareness of their special needs and concerns.

PCA Budget

Since the Pennsylvania Department of Aging has not released any allocation information for next year, it is understandable that PCA is projecting flat funding. However, we hope that once PCA receives its allocation information the public will be notified of any changes to the proposed projections. An announcement can be posted through the *PCACares News Bulletin* and *Milestones*. As PCA struggles with the challenge of meeting the escalating needs of older Philadelphians while anticipating no increase in funding, CARIE recommends PCA evaluate other budget line items not presented today to try to leverage as many resources as possible to programs and services needed by older Philadelphians. For example, upon reviewing PCA's most recently posted IRS 990 forms for fiscal year 2007/08, Levlane Advertising was compensated over a million dollars for marketing. Recently, we have noticed such items as color ads in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and glossy fundraising mailings for the Philly Meals on Wheels program. Addressing marketing needs could be done in a more cost effective way and the marketing budget should mirror the "bare bones" funding available for programs and services. Additionally, it is unfortunate if someone learns of programs via advertising that can only offer a waiting list. PCA should consider a reduction to its marketing budget and redirect these savings to address the Options waiting list, supplement legal services funding, and support other services older Philadelphians need.

PCA Helpline

CARIE would like to commend the PCA Helpline for its capacity to respond to non-English speaking callers. Having bilingual staff, dedicated foreign language lines,

and access to the Language Line ensures access for all older Philadelphians who do not speak English. However, recently CARIE has become aware that individuals calling PCA's Helpline can wait for extremely long times before their call is answered by a staff person. Since the PCA Helpline is the main source of intake, information and referral for PCA services; it is essential that calls be answered in a timely way. Of particular concern are those who are calling the Helpline for protective services. These calls may involve emergency or urgent situations that require a timely response, or may involve victims who muster the courage to call for help for the first time but who decide to forgo help when their call goes unanswered. CARIE recommends that when the PCA Helpline is not able to answer calls in a timely way that a contingency plan be implemented to triage calls, ensuring calls about protective services are answered quickly.

Staff Training and Support

PCA care managers do not appear to be consistently accessing Medicare services or community-based services not affiliated with PCA on behalf of their clients. We are not sure if this is a training issue, the byproduct of high case loads, or both. Current budget constraints coupled with the growing needs of older Philadelphians should compel PCA to ensure that clients are receiving all possible benefits and services. CARIE recommends implementing a training program and supervisory support for care managers that encourages and ensures the use of Medicare funded services as well as community-based services not associated with PCA. Supervisors should review assessments and care plans to ensure that all potential resources are being accessed.

PCA Contracting

We are pleased to partner with PCA in assisting with long-term care ombudsman services, transportation advocacy for non-sponsored riders and outreach for health insurance counseling. While we and other agencies that have contracts or grants from PCA cannot expect budget increases in light of the current fiscal climate, PCA can help agencies save valuable time by making improvements in its contract management. We would be pleased to work with PCA to help streamline and standardize its contract requirements to allow for greater flexibility. We welcome training and dialogue with

contractors and contract managers. We would like to see a system that saves resources for contractors and PCA alike. For example, last year, we requested that the budget forms to be put in *Excel* format so that we could easily budget and re-budget. We are grateful that it has happened making our work a bit more efficient and we expect that reviewing has become more accessible for PCA contract management as well.

Conclusion

We want to conclude our comments by complementing PCA on its *PCACares News Bulletin*. It is an excellent resource and serves as a community bulletin board providing agencies the opportunity to post news items and job openings. CARIE has had resources posted and is grateful to PCA for disseminating our information.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.