

**Senate Finance Sub Committee on Health and  
Human Resources, Monday, January 28<sup>th</sup> 4 p.m.  
10<sup>th</sup> floor Conference Room  
Presentation by Mike Wenk, AARP Volunteer  
Legislative Budget Specialist**

Good Afternoon, Chairman Houck and Distinguished members of the Senate Finance Sub Committee on Health and Human Resources, I am Mike Wenk, State Legislative Budget Specialist, for AARP Virginia. I bring you best wishes from more than 1 million AARP members in this Commonwealth. As a member of the State AARP Advocacy Team, I represent the voices of our members who are 50 and better in this Commonwealth.

Today, AARP Virginia is pleased to speak to you about the areas of health and human resource introduced budget that we support.

We agree with the mental health proposals in the budget. And AARP supports the Pre-K initiative in the Commonwealth. Research shows that 6% of all Virginia children are being raised by grandparents. These grandparents need all the help they can to give these children an equal chance.

AARP's Bill Lukhard served on the Governor's Health Care Reform Commission and we strongly support the recommendations of this Commission on access to health care.

We agree that the VirginiaShare Program that is in budget is a good first step and forward thinking for Virginia. In fact, you will see us Rallying at the Bell Tower on Wednesday of this week to support Senator Saslaw and

Senator Watkins bill on VirginiaShare. Virginia has to address the fact that we have more than 1 million that do not have health insurance. This impacts many of our members who are 50 to 64.

In the fall of 2007, AARP Virginia held three Health Care Reform Town Hall meetings across this Commonwealth. Amidst standing room only crowds, we heard powerful personal stories about the growing health and long term care crisis in our Commonwealth. The stories centered around the lack of health care providers to take on senior patients. We heard from personal care workers caring for frail, disabled and elderly, who are ill and do not have health care insurance. These stories affirm the need to expand access to health care.

- Now, I want to talk with you about a long term care need that is a high priority for AARP in this year's budget. We need to get the Virginia Long Term Care Ombudsman Program funded to meet the growing need for quality care of our older citizens who are in nursing facilities across the Commonwealth. We urge you to address the funding for this program because you get improved quality of care for our most vulnerable consumers; you help minimize human suffering and help families work directly with providers rather than having to wait for inspections and litigation.

- We ask you to remember the Virginia Caregiver Grant Program and support the family caregivers

that need a break from their 24 hour service to their loved ones.

In summary, we urge you to address these health and long term care priorities of our most vulnerable Virginians.

Expanding access to health care for more of our older Virginians without health care insurance is a top priority for AARP and hopefully this will be the case for you, the members of this committee as well.

Our AARP Advocacy Team stands ready to work with you for a better Virginia during this 2008 General Assembly.

Thank you very much for your consideration.