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Contact: Gerardo Cardenas (312) 351-0228

STATE TREASURER, AARP, SENIOR SERVICE GROUPS URGE GOVERNOR, LEGISLATURE TO PASS BUDGET, PROTECT OLDER ILLINOISANS

State Seniors Face Grave Hardships as Local Organizations, Cut Critical Services & Face Closure

SPRINGFIELD-With thousands of older adults at risk of, or already losing, in-home services due to the current budget stalemate, today AARP, State Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs, community organizations and Springfield residents urged Governor Rauner and the General Assembly to cease political posturing and pass a full Fiscal Year 2016 state budget that funds the critical home and community-based programs and services countless Illinoisans depend on.

During a press conference outside Senior Services of Central Illinois – an organization that has recently been forced to cut services and payroll due to the lack of a state budget – the speakers noted that older Illinoisans are already facing grave hardships because the organizations they rely on are no longer able to provide essential services like meals on wheels, financial, or transportation assistance. With the Governor and legislators due back in Springfield for session, it is imperative to fully fund programs in efficient and effective ways that save taxpayers' money, stimulate our state's economy and provide critical services to vulnerable populations.

“The lack of a state budget is not only hurting countless older residents, individuals with disabilities, children, and working families; it is also deepening our financial crisis now, and for the foreseeable future. Fully-funding home and community-based services is a win-win as it both protects the dignity and independence of those who rely on the services and it is good stewardship of state taxpayer dollars,” said Ryan Gruenenfelder, Manager of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Illinois.

“The financial crisis in Illinois is hurting our state's most vulnerable, including Illinois seniors,” said Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs. “It is vital that the Governor and General Assembly put aside their differences to end this budget impasse and alleviate the uncertainty for the many families who rely on state funding.”

“The impact of the budget impasse on older persons in our community and across the State is closing the doors of services, like those provided by Senior Services of Central Illinois, that help seniors remain independent and in their own homes,” said Karen Schainker, Executive Director of Senior Services of Central Illinois. “Without nutrition and transportation and resource assistance programs, otherwise independent senior citizens are forced to prematurely enter

institutionalized settings, actually costing the taxpayers substantially more dollars and lowering the seniors quality of life.”

“The absence of General Revenue Funds to the aging network has not only resulted in a serious limitation of service for older individuals, but also is taking a toll on service provider agencies as they struggle to maintain staffing levels and daily program operations,” said Julie Hubbard, Executive Director for the Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland. “Particularly hard hit are the Home Delivered Meals programs, which are forced to make heart-wrenching decisions regarding which homebound elderly people will receive fewer meals because of the 66% reduction in grant funds.”

“I had a double cornea transplant last summer and can no longer see, much less drive to the grocery store,” said John Zorn from Springfield, an Air Force Veteran who served in the Korean War. “The meals I get home delivered to me are essential as I can no longer cook, either. Without that support I am not sure what is going to happen to me.”

State programs providing caregiving services for older individuals, such as Illinois’ Community Care Program are catalysts for economic growth and prosperity for Illinois statewide. AARP highlighted important economic advantages these programs invest in Illinois, according to the *Innovation Illinois Caregiver Impacts Report* based on Fiscal Year 2013 numbers:

- Every dollar spent on home care in Illinois generates \$2.04 in economic activity in the state.
- The Community Care Program created 35,400 home caregiver jobs, and indirectly generated another 12,390 jobs in Illinois.
- Based on the program’s monthly average cost of care per client (\$854), CCP is estimated to provide average cost savings of \$20,496 per consumer per year compared with nursing home care.
- Illinois saves more than \$600 million a year in Medicaid costs via the home-care model instead of more costly public institutionalization. After subtracting the Federal Medicaid match, that translates into more than \$300 million in GRF savings.

AARP, on behalf of our 1.7 million Illinois members, along with State Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs, Senior Services of Central Illinois, the Area Agency on Aging of Lincolnland, dozens of other organizations, and area residents urge the Governor and the General Assembly to rise above politics, prioritize the life and well-being of our state’s most vulnerable population and immediately pass a budget which fully funds home and community-based services.

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