

2018 SWPPA Candidates Survey Response



Candidate: Michele Knoll
State House District: 44
Campaign Website: <http://knoll4pa44.com/>

Focus Area One: **Lottery**

Question: Several years ago the Legislature began transferring Lottery funds to the General Fund to support Medicaid programs and institutionalization, creating an \$18 million shortage in the Lottery fund for the first time since its inception. What are your thoughts about the practice of shifting lottery funds from HCBS to support institutionalization, and what position would you take in that regard?

Response: These funds should not be transferred to support institutionalization. Although there are some instances when individuals may need institutional care, for the most part support in the individual's home is preferred. Being able to continue to reside in the same home that is familiar and will help protect the memory of the resident as well as their dignity, quality of life, and independence as long as possible. I met a 93 year old woman, residing in the home she grew up in; she was making brownies for the residents in the institution for elderly down the street. I hope I can be living as purpose filled life as she is when I am 93.

Question: Please explain your position on the preservation and use of Lottery revenues to fund services for older Pennsylvanians.

Response: We should not take the Lottery funds to fund video terminals. We do not need to encourage any more gaming that may create a gambling addiction.

Question: Would you support or not support back filling the transfer of Lottery revenue to Medicaid programs with Lottery revenue gained through the newly authorized online sports betting in PA?

Response: Since online sports betting is now a fact, I would support back filling the transfer of Lottery revenue to Medicaid program.

Question: What is your position with regard to legislation that may shift revenue from the Lottery

fund to private clubs and out of state promoters?

Response: I would oppose this shift of revenue to private clubs and out of state promoters. The revenues should fund programs for older adults and remain in the state of Pennsylvania.

Focus Area 2: **Community Health Choices**

Question: The implementation of CHC began in the Southwestern region of PA in January. How informed are you about CHC and the potential benefits/implications it has for aging Pennsylvanians and the agencies that support them?

Response: I am more familiar with CHC since I have been working with young children with disabilities and delays who sometimes have grandparents or great grandparents caring for them and because of having friends and family members in the aging population. I see the workforce issues being paramount to making the system function. There is a high turnover among workers who are paid low wages with difficult working conditions. Seniors in the Pittsburgh area are distressed over the feud between healthcare givers, and rightly so, since it ultimately could effect their quality of healthcare. Healthcare plans that are reduced or services being denied will lead to elderly dying from neglect or suffering more debilitating dementia due to lack of stimulation. On the campaign trail, older adults often engage me in lengthy conversations, I believe due to being lonely. Finding a way to continue to be functional and useful is essential to anyone's personal happiness. I have a couple of octogenarians in another district writing postcards for my campaign, purpose driven lives. Seniors vowing "You have my vote" and shaking my hand is proving that they have a role in the community.

Question: Moving home and community waiver services to a managed care system does have several potential negative outcomes. It could threaten consumer choice, limit or restrict access to service, and limit actual service levels. How would you assure the state maintains consistent oversight of MCO's and holds them accountable for quality care and positive service outcomes?

Response: To maintain vigilant oversight, sufficient funding and staffing of inspectors must be supported. Enforcement as well as levying fines should help to encourage managed care system to maintain a higher standards.

Question: Reimbursement rates for Medicaid waiver services in the Southwest region are lower than in any other region across the state, and they have been since 2012. This directly impacts the agencies and workers, who are responsible for supporting CHC in our

region. What efforts will you make to advocate for fairer reimbursement rates in the Southwest region?

Response: I will work directly on advocating for fairer reimbursement in the Southwest region. I will do this because it impacts the constituents of my district, my friends, and my relatives. I will be an advocate for the workers because they do not have time to advocate for themselves while working long, difficult hours and because all workers deserve a fair wage and dignity in the workplace.

Focus Area 3: **Older Adult Protective Services**

Question: What are your thoughts about balancing the need to protect vulnerable older adults and to assure the rights of Pennsylvania workers?

Response: Our most vulnerable citizens must be protected. Persons who have been found to be exploitative or abusive to seniors should not be in the workforce that engages with older adults, just as those who have been exploitative or abusive to children should not work with children. However, some areas that have recently been mandatory sentences, which may ultimately be reversed, such as those individuals having minor drug offenses may be good candidates for compassionate, hard workers in the field.

Question: Do you have a position on expanding efforts to recognize and address financial exploitation, which will mean including the banking and financial services industries in ways they have not been involved up to this point?

Response: Financial exploitation is rampant in situations where older adults are concerned. Phone calls selling bogus items, computer scams, out of country lotteries, "sales" people who gain entrance to homes and rob older adults, and the notorious "grandma or grandpa" call for bail are all ways that vulnerable citizens are exploited. Financial services should only operate as a fiduciary for older adults. My own grandmother was exploited in a scam at a bank where the Chief Financial Officer of the institution skimmed money off bank accounts of older adults who were not watching their accounts carefully and then blamed young bank tellers, saying they had skimmed the money. The FBI got involved and my grandmother actually helped with the CEO's conviction.

Question: It is estimated that the AAA's Adult Protective Services program is underfunded by as much as \$8 million. Based on the implications of HB2549, it is reasonable to expect an increase in protective services reporting. How would you propose to address this funding shortage?

Response: I think realizing that the enforcement of this bill will ultimately reduce costs. If an older adult is abandoned in a hospital or left to fend for themselves in a home when they are unable, the costs are high in health care costs or mental health care costs. We as a society pay for these hospital stays which are very expensive. It would be more cost effective to stop problems before they occur rather than remediation.

Question: As you consider your legislative priorities, where does amending the OAPS act fall?

Response: I believe that legislators should pass legislation requiring all workers and administrators to take mandatory training that teaches them how to report and recognize incidents and abuses. Just outlining them in the OAPS isn't enough. Everyone working in the field must take appropriate training.

Focus Area 4: **Direct Care Workforce**

Question: Given Pennsylvania's aging demographics, the increasing demand for Medicaid waiver funded services, and the current direct care workforce crisis, what recommendations might you make to assure Pennsylvania can create a robust and ready workforce, supported by living wages, able to meet the demand for care?

Response: Raising wages, making sure that there are safe staffing rations, and providing paid sick leave and vacation time as well as providing adequate training to existing workers can help. If a more dignified work place is maintained, it may attract more qualified workers committed to staying in the job. There is a European model of creating a more village like atmosphere, especially for individuals with dementia, may help attract workers. Some European states have also offered housing of university students with older adults in order to save on housing costs for both age groups but also to provide a more community like atmosphere within the setting. This benefits both generations and keeps costs lower for everyone. This setting provides companionship for the older adults, saves university students housing costs, and reduces the need for staff because the roommates are looking out for each other. Younger students are getting sage advice and the youth are stimulating the older adults with conversation.

Question: The most cost-effective type of care is care provided in settings of least restriction – most commonly home. Medicaid dollars can provide more care to more consumers over a longer period of time in less expensive settings. Unfortunately, without an adequate workforce to support care in this setting, we will never fully realize the impact of this cost saving approach. The primary obstacle in building a strong direct care workforce is low wages and unstable work conditions, driven largely by low Medicaid reimbursement rates. What measures would you advocate for in changing this and improving our reimbursement rates in Southwest PA?

Response: I work with young children with developmental delays and disabilities in their LRE or least restrictive environments which is the home or daycare. Using this model as an example of cost savings, it has been seen that providing intervention in the home early, prevents institutionalization later on and produces better outcomes in school settings as children enter the school-aged population. It should be self-evident that this model would work with older adults as well. The monies for Early Intervention come from the Federal Government then the state creates a model and each county in Pennsylvania manages the service or contracts out to agencies to monitor the system. If federal and state money could be melded to create a similar system

Additional Comments

Response: Protecting our most vulnerable citizens should be our priority since they can't always protect themselves or are at least vulnerable to people who may prey on them. We will all be older and will always need more help as we age, so we should be willing to help our older adults now with respect and compassion.