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**Alexandria Commission on Aging
Testimony to the Budget Public Hearing on March 10, 2010**

Mr. Mayor and Members of City Council:

My name is Bill Harris. I chair the Commission on Aging, and speak today on its behalf. Council has supported our older Alexandrians for many, many years. You've made lives better for countless individuals. For this we thank you.

I call your attention to the budget for the Office on Aging and Adult Services. We have studied it carefully and, while we don't like the proposed cuts, we believe they have been fairly applied. We're aware of the difficulties you face again this year, however we ask that you do everything possible to preserve services to our most vulnerable older citizens.

We're grateful that a vacant bus driver position is being saved, even though it's not funded. Transportation is crucial to the well being of older adults, and its prudent to maintain this position and fill it when you can.

Our particular concern today is the "Companion Services" program. Most senior adults want to live in their own homes as long as possible. This is no less true for those who may be poor and/or frail. This care services program is vital in helping them do so, and the Commission supports our seniors in this desire.

The proposed budget has cut these care services by \$120,000. We all know the number of elderly people is rapidly increasing. Their need for care services will only go up, not down. In this time of increasing needs, further cuts to Companion Services could be very harmful. Please, don't cut this program any further.

We thank you for your past support, and we urge you to keep the well-being of our older adults paramount in your budget deliberations.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

William P. Harris