



**B'nai B'rith
Senior Housing
Network**

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SENIORITY REPORT

Inform

We want to do our best to stay in touch with you. Please remember to send pictures and updates on the events in your building!

Sign Up

Reading the Seniority Report is a great way to stay informed on what we are doing here at CSS as well as having a pulse on aging in general. To sign up for this resource simply [Click Here](#)

Contribute

Want to contribute to the next issue of Seniority Report? Email us your own story or suggestions at: seniors@bnaibrith.org

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INTERNATIONAL**

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Center for Senior Services Hosts Community Service Project

Alongside Annual Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting

By Janel Doughten, Associate Director, Center for Senior Services



The annual B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) Housing Network Managers and Service Coordinators meeting was held in Asheville, N.C., which experienced a major disaster in September 2024 with Hurricane Helene. Taking the meeting to Asheville continues the CSS practice to hold meetings in areas recovering from disaster, while also learning from other senior housing providers to strengthen our own housing networks' emergency preparedness plans.

The meeting began on Wednesday with presentations from our own housing network on community partnerships. The group then saw one of those community partnerships in action by volunteering at

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Center for Senior Services Hosts Community Service Project

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Participants volunteering at the Haywood Street Welcome Table on Wednesday, June 11

the Haywood Street Welcome Table, an organization that provides community meals. Participants helped to greet, serve and clean up from the drop-in lunch program, as well as various other on-site projects such as working in the arts room or gardening. This program continues a tradition of community service paired with the meetings that began in 2019 when attendees volunteered at local farms in Puerto Rico planting vegetables and preparing food packages for hurricane victims.

The next two days of the program featured issues of concern for older Americans and our on-site building staff, including older adult sensitivity training, updates from staff from

the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), briefings from congressional and federal agency staff—including the American Association of Service Coordinators—and additional HUD policy sessions led by CSS experts.

Particularly relevant for administrators at Jewish-sponsored residences, security enhancement was addressed in response to the rise in anti-Semitic incidents following Israel's defensive war with Hamas as well as the conflict between Israel and Iran. On Friday morning, the sessions focused on emergencies, with a visit to Givens Gerber Park, an affordable HUD senior

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Center for Senior Services Hosts Community Service Project

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housing facility where residents remained in place during Hurricane Helene. Staff from the building talked about their experiences, including how they worked with the residents in the extended aftermath of the storm with no water and electricity. After an informative discussion, participants stuffed emergency preparedness bags for the 270 residents of Givens Gerber Park.

Continuing the discussion on Hurricane Helene, the National Alliance on Mental Illness Western North Carolina (NAMI) addressed the mental health component in disasters

and recovery. NAMI is a national organization with local affiliates that can be a resource for our residents.

The meeting ended with a debriefing and resources on all the topics discussed over the three days of the program.

As the largest national Jewish sponsor of non-sectarian subsidized housing for the elderly in the United States, CSS is committed to educating its building administrators at residential facilities for older Americans. It is the mission of CSS and the building staff to protect and improve the quality of life for the residents in each building.



Participants at Givens Gerber Park on Friday, June 13





A Note from the Chair

Dennis Rice, Chair, B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services

This is my first report since my appointment as chair of the Center for Senior Services. I am honored to serve and know I have big shoes to fill. Marvin Siflinger served as chair for many years with distinction. For the last seven years, I have served as co-chair of the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Committee. Working with my co-chair, Abbie Stone, Marvin and the Center for Senior Services staff headed by CSS Director Mark Olshan and including CSS Associate Director Janel Doughten and CSS Legislative Director for Aging Policy Evan Carmen, has been a pleasure. Janel and Evan have been invaluable in providing me the tools to learn about senior housing.

Janel and the staff hold regular meetings (virtual and in person) to bring our individual local staff members and board leadership up to date on policies and priorities impacting the world of senior services.

On a regular basis they hold B'nai B'rith CSS conference calls with staff from the various B'nai B'rith sponsored housing facilities.

Items discussed and reviewed recently at these meetings include:

Congressional Updates

B'nai B'rith continues to meet with Congressional offices that represent our sponsored buildings around the country. Our team focused their meetings on members of Congress who help write the budget. Our CSS staff members also meet with elected members who are not familiar with B'nai B'rith. And our staff arranges for members of Congress and their staff members to tour our housing facilities and meet one-to-one with residents to learn about the vital need for HUD sponsored housing for older adults.

HUD Updates

Our CSS team is in constant contact with HUD officials and sends important updates to our buildings' leadership about relevant programs and policies.

Social Security Administration (SSA)

There have been many policy changes at SSA, including walk-backs of previously announced changes. B'nai B'rith advises building staff to regularly update residents on changes

Building Security Updates

With anti-semitic attacks across the country, it is important for our facilities to review their security measures. The murders of two young people attending an event at the Capital Jewish Museum in May and the June firebomb attacks in Boulder, Colorado, against marchers gathered to call attention to the plight of the hostages still held by Hamas, remind us we must be especially vigilant about safety. CSS staff are regularly in touch with representatives from the Secure Community Network (SCN) and can set up a security assessment for your building.

Resident Leadership Retreat, Perlman Camp, Lake Como, Pennsylvania

Every two years Janel Doughten coordinates a weeklong resident leadership development retreat at Perlman Camp, a youth summer camp in Lake Como, Pennsylvania. Two residents from each facility are invited to attend. Workshops stress the importance of collaborating with management, and programs educate attendees about B'nai B'rith. Resident leaders leave the retreat with practical "best practices" to implement at their buildings. In addition to Janel, Evan Carmen, Abbie Stone and the newest member of our volunteer leadership team, Bruce Menditch, round out the staff for the Retreat.

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A Note from the Co-Chair

By Bruce Menditch, co-chair of Senior Housing Committee

When my childhood friend Mike asked me to be on the board of Homecrest House it was because the board needed someone who had the expertise to help facilitate the renovations and upgrades of the property at that time. Mike considered me a good fit and convinced the board that I could fill this necessary vacancy. I was a little wary and nervous about what this responsibility entailed; however, I did join and found out that the mechanical and building systems were just a small part of what became my responsibility as a board member.

Homecrest House was a self-managed property that had to navigate the responsibilities of human resources, hiring, marketing, insurance, workmen's compensation, building maintenance and repairs, accounting, all while meeting all of the requirements of HUD and the local branch of the Montgomery County Housing Commission. These responsibilities took on a different light than a property that was managed by a third-party company. This required Homecrest to have active board members that were diversified in all the fields of management and human resources while accomplishing the board's mission statement of providing safe and secure housing to low-income seniors.

Over that next 20 years, my responsibility also included serving as board president. In this role, while recruiting new board members, I asked why they decided to join and why they decided to participate in a volunteer position that requires time and devotion without any monetary compensation.

The most common response was that they were asked to join because of their expertise in accounting, insurance, human resources, and building and property management. Some board members were retired and felt that being involved in a Jewish-sponsored organization providing the necessary housing and services to seniors would be personally rewarding.

My role as co-chair of the Senior Housing Committee is to bring my time and knowledge to help support the B'nai B'rith International Center for Senior Services. This includes bringing discussions on specific topics of interest that impact board members and improving best practices and procedures including to help enhance the recruitment and retainment of board members.

No matter what your reason and motivation is, it is a blessing that each one of us continues to bring our valuable knowledge and expertise to our properties.

I can only advise each one of us to remain fully involved to the best of our ability and desires, learn as much about the property, understand and know the mission statement of your property, and continue to remain a board member.

Thank you all for being part of the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Network.

Warmest Regards,

Bruce

Weather-related resources to share with your staff and residents. Some are available in multiple languages.

Extreme Heat Resources

Ready.gov: <https://www.ready.gov/heat>

Heat.gov: <https://www.heat.gov/>

National Weather Service:

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat>

Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/extreme-heat-safety.html>

Other weather-related safety resources

Ready.gov: <https://www.ready.gov/be-informed>

National Weather Service: <https://www.weather.gov/safety/>

Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies.html>



ON THE HILL



by Evan Carmen
Legislative Director for
Aging Policy

CSS Encourages Congress to Support Full Funding for HUD Senior Housing in FY26 Budget

The B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) has advocated to lawmakers since February for full funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) senior housing budget in fiscal year 2026. We have partnered with the American Association of Service Coordinators at meetings with lawmakers and their staffs at the U.S. Capitol to make our case for this vital funding.

Recently, the White House released a proposed budget for FY26. We are concerned the proposed budget could result in damaging cuts to the HUD senior housing portfolio. Consequently, we are meeting with your congressional representative to reinforce the critical importance of HUD senior housing. In addition, we are requesting members of Congress visit our sponsored properties around the country. These visits are the best way for lawmakers to see the value of HUD senior housing and speak with residents about seniors issues.

In 2025 we have met with staff members from the following offices:

SENATE

Tom Cotton (R-Ark.)
Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)
Katie Britt (R-Ala.)
John Boozman (R-Ark.)
Chris Coons (D-Del.)
Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.)
Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.)
Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.)
Adam Schiff (D-Calif.)
Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del.)
Senate Appropriations Committee

HOUSE

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D-Fla.)
Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.)
Barry Moore (R-Ala.)
Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)
Sarah McBride (D-Del.)
Rob Bresnahan (R-Pa.)
Ryan Mackenzie (R-Pa.)
Steve Womack (R-Ark.)
John Rutherford (R-Fla.)
Juan Ciscomani (R-Ariz.)
Peter Aguilar (D-Calif.)
Mike Quigley (D-Ill.)
Grace Meng (D-N.Y.)
Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.)
House Appropriations Committee

B'nai B'rith Expresses Concerns over Changes to Medicaid and SNAP Funding

B'nai B'rith International is disappointed Congress passed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. While we are encouraged by certain provisions of the legislation, we are deeply concerned about the broader impact this legislation could have on older adults.

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ON THE HILL

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Steep cuts to programs like Medicaid and SNAP could cause vulnerable older adults to lose critical safety nets and services. Once implemented, the new law could impact older adults by de-funding programs they rely on and using that “savings” to fund other congressional priorities. We are concerned making services less accessible will lead to less healthy seniors.

It should be noted we are encouraged by some aspects of this legislation. For instance, qualifying older adults benefit from tax relief specifically aimed at seniors. Also, we applaud Congress for expanding the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit which will provide more affordable housing around the country.

While Congress debated this legislation, CSS expressed our concerns about this bill to your congressional representatives' offices. Please note CSS will monitor the implementation of this legislation and make your elected officials aware of its impact as appropriate.

B'nai B'rith Calls for Full Staffing during Congressional Meeting

B'nai B'rith has expressed our concern that a diminishing federal workforce could negatively impact quality of life for older adults in need. There is a critical need for adequate staffing at HUD, the Social Security Administration and other federal departments, to ensure the proper administration and oversight of senior housing initiatives and other programs that impact older adults.

A Note from the Chair

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Annual Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting

Janel Doughten plans the annual managers and service coordinators meeting for the staff from our housing network. Evan Carmen and Abbie Stone also participated, along with other leaders in the industry. The meeting is in Asheville, North Carolina, which suffered extensive damage from Hurricane Helene. A local senior housing provider, Givens Gerber Park, led a session on lessons learned from the disaster. You can read more about the meeting in this issue.

Annual Conferences on Senior Housing

Board members of our facilities, as well as managers and assistant managers gather twice each year—once in person and once virtually—for three days of meetings and workshops. The programs feature speakers from various government agencies and also include sessions on leadership development skills covering a number of pertinent subjects. This year the Annual Conference will be held in Baltimore, MD and hosted by B'nai B'rith Homecrest House. More details to come this summer.

We are so lucky to have a talented B'nai B'rith staff at our International headquarters in Washington, D.C., Mark, Janel and Evan, our volunteer leadership, as well as top notch management companies and staff in each of our buildings.

I am looking forward to continuing my leadership role at B'nai B'rith International and CSS in my new position as Chair of the Center for Senior Services.



Social Security Fairness Act Becomes a Law!

By Evan Carmen (Originally Posted 1.21.2025)

I remember watching cable news constantly last month as Congress raced to avoid a shutdown. For two days it was wall-to-wall coverage detailing a variety of plans to keep the government open. Thankfully, a government shutdown was averted. Given the chaos on Capitol Hill at the same time, you may have missed that the Senate passed the Social Security Fairness Act (SSFA), with bi-partisan support following the House's approval in November.

On Jan. 5th, President Joe Biden signed the bill into law, marking a big win for millions of Social Security recipients like Evelyn Paternostro, an 84-year-old from Louisiana who works part time at the Dollar Tree. According to CBS News, Paternostro, a former teacher and principal, currently receives a state pension. However, because of a quirk in the system she was not eligible for her husband's Social Security survivor benefits. Losing her husband's benefits was a hardship, forcing her to work at the Dollar Tree to make ends meet.

Paternostro's benefit reduction was emblematic of about 2.8 million people around the country. Some people, such as teachers, firefighters, and police officers did not pay into Social Security because they received a government pension instead. Many of these retirees then took on another job that did pay into Social Security. However, under the previous law, these individuals and living spouses (people who get Social Security because of their spouse) received less Social Security than what they were entitled to because the government offset their pension from the non-covered job. Thankfully, the SSFA helps correct these benefit reductions.

So, what does this mean in actual dollars?

According to USA Today, Don Hillbush, from Reading, Pennsylvania, is a retired police Sergeant, who receives a

pension from a job not covered by Social Security. In addition to serving as a police officer from 1969 to 2018, Hillbush worked part time jobs and paid into Social Security. Sadly, his Social Security benefits were reduced from \$1,100 to \$350 a month due to his pension. That was a whopping \$9,000 a year!

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the SSFA increases benefits by an average of \$360 a month for those with a pension from a non-covered job who have worked other jobs where they paid into Social Security.

Senator Bill Cassidy (R-La.) told colleagues last month that the current Social Security system, "penalize families across the country who worked a public service job for part of their career with a separate pension." He said, "We're talking about police officers, firefighters, teachers, and other public employees who are punished for serving their communities."

Unfortunately, not everyone agrees. People argue that the legislation speeds up the Social Security Trust Fund's insolvency date by six months. While I appreciate that argument, people's earned benefits should not be cut to save money. Social Security's long-term solvency will need a solution around 2033. Six months either way is not a reason to reduce benefits.

At the signing ceremony Biden said, "By signing this bill, we're extending Social Security benefits for millions of teachers, nurses and other public employees and their spouses and survivors." Public servants perform a critical role helping to deliver government services at the federal, state and local level. Working a non-covered Social Security job with a pension should not be a reason to reduce a person's Social Security benefits. Your benefits should be based on your contributions to the system, regardless of other sources of income. To me it's a basic rule of fairness that all seniors deserve.

Upcoming CSS Events

Resident Leadership Retreat: August 7-12, 2025

The Resident Leadership Retreat, held every other summer, will take place Aug. 7-12 at B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp. Open to two resident leaders from each building, the goal of the retreat is to help develop and improve leadership skills so residents can better run their respective Residents Associations. Attendees participate in workshops, programs and even activities with young campers, leaving with great ideas to take back to their buildings. A key element of the retreat is the network of other Resident Association leaders and CSS staff that attendees can stay connected with to consult on issues or share ideas.

Held at B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp since 1987, this marks the 38th year of the retreat. What originally began as a weekend program has expanded to a weeklong retreat. We are looking forward to many more!



B'nai B'rith International Conference on Senior Housing: September 14-16, 2025

This year's B'nai B'rith International Conference on Senior Housing will be held Sept. 14-16, 2025, at the Royal Sonesta Harbor Court Baltimore in the Inner Harbor. Hosted by B'nai B'rith Homecrest House, the conference will include a visit to the building, as well as industry updates and training. Details to come soon!