

Gov. Snyder Appoints Director of Wayne State's Institute of Gerontology to Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging

LANSING, Mich. – Peter Lichtenberg, Ph.D., director of the Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University, has been appointed to the Commission on Services to the Aging by Gov. Rick Snyder. “I consider this a great honor to be able to impact the lives of older adults across the entire state,” Lichtenberg said.



The bipartisan commission is comprised of 15 members (most older than 60) appointed by the governor to oversee the administration of state programs and priorities affecting aging Michiganders. “This is a talented group of appointees, and I am confident they will continue to ensure that aging adults have the opportunity to live healthy and independent lives,” Snyder said. Lichtenberg has worked with older adults for more than 30 years as a clinical geropsychologist, researcher, program director and national leader. In addition to directing the Institute of Gerontology since 1998, he has been director of the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute for Child & Family Development since 2009.

Lichtenberg’s goals for the commission are fourfold. “First I’d like us to have a broad perspective that allows us to determine what Michigan’s older adults need for optimal vitality and independence,” Lichtenberg said. At the same time, he wants to insure that the oldest frail adults receive sufficient care and attention. “We are at the forefront of a dramatic increase in residents older than 85. Michigan must respond appropriately and successfully.”

A third goal is to recognize and combat ageism in attitudes and policies. “The words we use, stereotypes, humor – all of it can fuel a disrespect and even dislike of older adults,” Lichtenberg said. “It’s insidious.” Lastly, the commission oversees how money is spent on services to the aging. Lichtenberg wants to make sure the state invests wisely and fairly in the lives of its older adults. “I want equity across regions. Regardless of zip code, all older adults deserve support.”

Lichtenberg was encouraged to apply to the commission based on his earlier chairmanship of the Michigan Dementia Coalition. “Our work on that coalition had a strong impact,” he said. “I felt a responsibility to see if we could inspire similar change through the state commission.”

Lichtenberg has received many distinctions, most recently the 2013 Elder Law of Michigan Association Call to Justice Leadership Award, the 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, and Oakland County’s 2015 Elder Abuse Task Force Call to Courage Award. He has served on national and local boards and held leadership positions in several professional organizations including the Michigan Dementia Coalition (Chair) from 1999-2010, the Gerontological Society of America, and the American Psychological Association. Lichtenberg is the second person from the Institute of Gerontology appointed to the commission in the past four years.

The Institute of Gerontology researches aging, educates students in gerontology, and presents programs on aging issues relevant to professionals, caregivers and older adults in the community (www.iog.wayne.edu). The Institute is part of the Division of Research at Wayne State University, one of the nation’s preeminent public research institutions in an urban setting. For more information about research at Wayne State University, visit <http://www.research.wayne.edu>.