



advocacy | action | answers on aging

## National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

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### **Trump's First Budget Puts Vulnerable Older Adults at Risk**

**Washington, DC**— Yesterday, President Trump sent to Congress the first outline of his discretionary spending plan for FY 2018. The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which represents the nation's 622 Area Agencies on Aging that develop and deliver local aging programs and services to millions of older adults and their caregivers, is gravely concerned about how the budget could affect vital community supports.

“While we don't yet have all the details on what the Trump Administration's plan would mean for vulnerable older adults and struggling caregivers, the proposals released yesterday would, if enacted by Congress, put at risk the health, safety and independence of many low-income seniors,” said n4a CEO Sandy Markwood.

“We urge Congress to reject these drastic cuts and provide funding in FY 2018 that reflects the needs of our nation's rapidly increasing aging population and supports the cost-effective home and community-based aging services that successfully address those needs in every community across the country.”

The Trump budget would eliminate five major programs that help low-income older adults meet their basic needs, find jobs to make ends meet, give back to their communities through volunteerism, and live independently at home and in the community, avoiding more expensive nursing home care.

The **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, helps low-income older adults afford their utility bills, so they can keep the lights on and stay warm in the winter and safely cool in the summer. While the program is not limited to seniors and helps a wide range of low-income households, the loss of this funding of more than \$3.4 billion would directly hurt the seniors who receive the financial help.

The **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**, which is Title V of the Older Americans Act and administered by the Department of Labor, would also be eliminated in the Trump budget. Losing this \$434 million program—the only federal job training program focused on the unique needs of older workers—would immediately affect the approximately 70,000 age 55+ workers who receive skills training, job placement help and subsidized community service jobs annually. Without SCSEP, these very low-income seniors would struggle to find the employment that they need to make

ends meet. The tens of thousands of community agencies who host many SCSEP workers would also lose millions of hours of staff support, making it more difficult to achieve their missions to serve older adults, children and youth, and other members of their community.

Two major community-focused block grants would be eliminated, as well. The **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG, administered by HHS)** provides states and localities with flexible funds to improve community health and living conditions for low-income families and seniors by funding free-standing programs. Also, when there is not enough funding in another community program to meet demand, CSBG funds provide supplemental support to expand the reach and impact of the existing program. For those age 55 and older, these services may include home-based household and personal care activities, nutritious home-delivered or congregate meals, Adult Protective Services or transportation to and from medical appointments. Approximately one in five individuals served by CSBG are age 55 or older and almost 8 percent are age 70 or older, which means roughly \$56 million of CSBG's total funding of \$715 million is directed to helping low-income older adults stay safe, healthy and living independently in the community. This critical support would all be lost if CSBG is eliminated.

The **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG, administered by HUD)**, works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses. CDBG is an important tool for helping local governments tackle serious challenges facing their communities. *To a limited degree, some localities use CDBG to supplement their existing home-delivered meals programs (often branded as "Meals on Wheels").*

Any cut to these life-saving nutrition programs is a mistake, but we must point out that the dominant source of funding for home-delivered meals to seniors in every community across the country is the **Older Americans Act (OAA, administered by HHS)**. The budget released yesterday does not drill down far enough to know how the OAA nutrition, in-home services, transportation, case management, long-term care ombudsman, elder justice and other vital programs will fare under the next, more detailed version of the Trump budget. We have tremendous concern, however, that the nearly 18 percent cut to HHS could spell disaster for all OAA programs and services, as well as other critical discretionary programs serving seniors.

Finally, the budget eliminates the **Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)**, an independent agency which runs the long-standing, popular **Senior Corps** programs, specifically Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions and RSVP. Senior Corps is the only national program able to place large numbers of senior volunteers in high-quality volunteer positions, generating 96 million hours of service to communities. When older volunteers provide vital services in their communities, it also helps those volunteers remain engaged in society. Given the health benefits of volunteering, this is a win-win for older adults and the communities they serve.

## **About n4a**

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is a 501c(3) membership association representing America's national network of 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and providing a voice in the nation's capital for the 256 Title VI Native American aging programs. The mission of n4a is to build the capacity of its members so they can

better help older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

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