

DRAFT
Lincoln-Stabenow DC Letter on OAA

April 16, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

We respectfully request an overall increase of at least 12% in appropriations for all Older Americans Act (OAA) programs in the FY 2011 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

The OAA is the cornerstone of the nation's long-term care system, providing older adults with critical services that include information and referral, home care, home-delivered meals (Meals On Wheels), adult day care, legal services, transportation and caregiver support. Without these programs, more than 8 million older adults each year would need more expensive institutional care or suffer from hunger, isolation, poor health, neglect, abuse, unemployment or other challenges to their quality of life.

In 2006, the OAA was reauthorized to better meet Congress's vision of offering people greater choice, control and independence by modernizing our long-term care system. Unfortunately, necessary funding has not followed. For years, OAA appropriations have failed to keep pace with growth in inflation and the aging population, leading to a significant shortfall even as demand increases.

The need for OAA programs among older adults and caregivers cannot be greater during these difficult economic times. There are now nearly 39 million Americans over the age of 65, making up approximately 13% of the total U.S. population. As additional seniors and caregivers face financial troubles, more will come to need the bedrock programs created by the OAA. Furthermore, investing in OAA programs will save taxpayer dollars by reducing premature or costly Medicaid and Medicare expenditures as a result of unnecessary nursing home placement or poor management of nutrition and chronic health conditions.

We commend the Administration's significant budget request for the OAA's National Family Caregiver Support Program, Title III B Supportive Services and the Title VI Native American aging programs — all part of the Caregiver Initiative — as an important first step in addressing these needs. However, in order to respond to years of stagnant funding for OAA and as the population, demand for services, and inflation continue to grow, an increase of at least 12% *overall* will be needed.

Thank you for your careful consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

