



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

2011 Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act

April 14, 2010

Kathy Greenlee
Assistant Secretary for Aging
Administration on Aging
One Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Greenlee:

Our leadership is poised, prepared and ready to work with you to bring the entire Aging Network to a newly recognized role in bridging the medical and home systems of services and supports, catalyzing community and economic development to better meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities, and empowering caregivers and individuals who need support with the information and tools they require.

Thank you for this valuable opportunity to provide input to the Administration on Aging (AoA) as you develop the Administration's positions on the 2011 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA). As you know, n4a is proud to represent the nation's 629 Area Agencies on Aging and to be a champion in Washington, DC for the 244 Title VI Native American Aging Programs. We believe that the Older Americans Act is the critical cornerstone of aging services in this nation and that the 2011 reauthorization provides us with an opportunity to build on the successes of the Act in order to respond to the needs of today's and tomorrow's older adults and caregivers.

n4a's process to develop our reauthorization recommendations is just beginning and will continue through the summer. We have already hosted three focus groups on the eve of AoA's Listening Sessions this winter and have launched a survey to further gather information on what Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) believe would be helpful changes to the Act. We will be surveying Title VI Native American aging programs in the near future.

We are also conducting OAA reauthorization sessions at our April 19-20 Aging Policy Briefing and Capitol Hill Day in Washington, DC—and we are so pleased you can kick that session off with remarks. We are holding an OAA reauthorization forum at our Annual Conference, July

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18-21 in St. Louis, MO, and our membership across the country are planning and implementing local discussion sessions. In the fall, n4a will publish our official OAA reauthorization recommendations and begin to work with advocates and congressional champions to build momentum for 2011.

Based upon the input that we have received from AAAs and Title VI programs thus far, we have developed the following recommendations. Please understand that these are just our preliminary recommendations and do not encompass all the subject areas n4a expects to ultimately take a position on for reauthorization.

Topic: Home and Community-Based Services

Recommendation: Incorporate the key elements of **Project 2020** (S. 1257/H.R. 2852) into the reauthorization of the OAA single entry point models, evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention activities, and enhanced nursing home diversion/community living programs. Provide adequate funding to make these programs permanent and to bring them to scale nationally.

Rationale: Developed jointly by n4a and the National Association of State Units on Aging, *Project 2020* would take three AoA/CMS tested and proven approaches from the Aging Network to scale nationally. This strategy of providing long-term services will generate savings to Medicaid and Medicare at the federal and state levels, while simultaneously enabling older adults and individuals with disabilities to age in their homes and communities.

Topic: Other—Increase Authorization Levels

Recommendation: n4a seeks to raise the authorized funding levels for all titles of the OAA and expand on the number of core OAA services and supports with dedicated authorized funding amounts.

Rationale: OAA programs' budgets have eroded over the last several years as federal funding has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals in need of services. As a result, services funded by these programs have lost considerable service capacity, causing many families to be placed on waiting lists for supportive services, adding to their emotional, physical and financial hardships. A larger federal investment in core OAA services and supports is needed to ensure the Aging Network has the necessary resources in the years ahead to adequately serve the projected growth in the numbers of older adults. This is particularly true both of the growing ranks of caregivers and the 85 and older population who are the most frail, vulnerable and in the greatest need of supportive services.

Topic: Other—Local Flexibility

Recommendation: Make no change to the Act that unnecessarily restricts the local flexibility and person-centered inherent nature of the OAA's core philosophy and history.

Rationale: Of top importance to AAAs and Title VI programs is increasing local flexibility in order to provide more customized care for the consumers that they serve. The reauthorization

should provide opportunities to determine if strategic reduction of unnecessary restrictions on local flexibility would ultimately provide a more person-centered and successful experience for the older adults and caregivers we serve, and should be careful not to impose new restrictions, even with the best of intentions, that further reduce the ability of AAAs/Title VI programs to meet their clients where they are and get them what they need.

Topic: Congregate Meals

Recommendation: Increase local flexibility to meet the nutritional needs of older adults by merging Title III C1 and C2.

Rationale: As the population ages, the need for home-delivered meals for the frail elderly in many communities has overshadowed the needs of younger, more mobile seniors for congregate meals. Combining C1 and C2 would allow AAAs the flexibility to use nutritional funds to meet the current needs of an aging population.

Topic: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention / Other—Long-Term Services and Supports

Recommendation: Strengthen the role of the Aging Network to integrate medical and human services–based long-term services and supports (LTSS), particularly in order to promote the Aging Network’s role in health, wellness (both physical and behavioral health) and care management.

Rationale: With the passage of health care reform, there are new opportunities for AAAs and Title VI programs to play a stronger and more enhanced role in promoting Medicare preventive services, transitional care, medical home model, options counseling and community-based/evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs.

Topic: Build Capacity of the Aging Network

Recommendation: Enhance the capacity of the Aging Network by including specific language to promote workforce development, utilization of technology and application of business models. The development of a Resource Center focused on building the capacity of the Aging Network would help to further the momentum of this effort by encouraging the sharing of information incorporating peer-to-peer networking and replication of best practices.

Rationale: While AoA has been able to pioneer several innovative and successful approaches to capacity building in recent years, the ever-shrinking pool of non-allocated resources does not enable AoA or the Network to truly invest in infrastructure and capacity building to the degree that is needed to meet the growing demands for services. Investments need to be made to provide the training and technology necessary to meet current and future service needs.

Topic: Native American Programs

Recommendation: Strengthen the capacity of the Title VI Native American aging programs to be able to better serve older adults and caregivers in Indian country.

Rationale: The need is so great in Indian country, yet the structural and financial resources provided under the Act are very limited. n4a looks forward to working with you and other advocates for Indian elders to explore how the reauthorization may present opportunities to expand capacity, provide additional technical assistance, and better serve this vulnerable population of older adults.

Topic: Other—Broaden Planning Role

Recommendation: Include language and funding authorization in the Act under Title III to support a full or part-time community development planner in every State Unit and AAA to advance the work in local communities to achieve livable communities for all ages. Additionally, support the development of an Aging Network capacity-building national resource center (previously referenced under “Build Capacity of Aging Network”). Such a center would provide training and technical assistance to State Units, AAAs and Title VI programs to help them enhance their own planning capacity by making the State and Area planning process more relevant, as well as to support their role as the visible catalyst and focal point with major stakeholders in the fields of housing, transportation, land use planning, workforce development and civic engagement in the development of livable communities for all ages.

Rationale: AAAs are the only locally based entity charged with planning and program development and reach to every corner of the nation. They are in a prime position to catalyze community and economic development engines towards this role. The current State and Area planning process currently serves as more of a funding request or compliance process than a true bottoms-up planning process. Now is the time to enhance the State and Area partnerships to guide the development of systems and services to meet the needs of older adults and their caregivers now and into the future. As part of this effort, State Units, AAAs and Title VI programs need to play a convening or major contributory role in the movement to create sustainable, livable communities for all ages. Such planning is critical to the effective integration of OAA services and to achieve quality of life for people across their lifespan.

Topic: Information and Referral

Recommendation: Include language in OAA that clarifies the relationship of AAAs and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs). Include language and funding authorization that reinforces and supports the role of AAAs/Title VI programs in person-centered access to information, assistance and public education so that older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers have ready access to information on long-term care planning; are connected to community-based long-term services and supports; and have access to options and benefits counseling and case management.

Rationale: As we move from demonstrations to a broader roll-out of ADRCs, it is essential to clarify how the role and responsibilities of the ADRC intersects with the roles and

responsibilities of the AAA. The stability of AAAs and Title VI programs can bring stability and sustainability to the ADRC concept.

Topic: Transportation

Recommendation: Expand the Aging Network’s role in the development and coordination of mobility management, including human services transportation, as a part of the State and Area planning function. Additionally, include language and authorization of funding in the Act to expand and enhance the information and assistance role of AAAs, Title VI programs and ADRCs to include the provision of mobility management services.

Rationale: The availability, accessibility and affordability of transportation is critical to ensuring the ability of older adults to live successfully and independently at home and in the community for as long as possible. It is imperative that AAAs and Title VI programs play an active role in planning and coordinating transportation services at the community level. Additionally, AAAs and Title VI programs are well positioned through their roles in providing information and assistance to expand these efforts to provide mobility management services to older adults.

Topic: Housing

Recommendation: Include a new title or language within existing titles, along with funding authorization, to expand the role of AAAs in coordinating services and supports to older adults in housing developments.

Rationale: n4a is interested in expanding the Aging Services Network’s role in the coordination of long-term services and supports in housing. Such coordination will maximize older adults’ quality of life, promote aging in place and foster the development of livable communities for all ages.

n4a’s Board, members and staff look forward to working with you and your staff as the reauthorization process unfolds. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of our country’s older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers.

Sincerely,



Lynn Kellogg
President

Attachments:

1. Sandy Markwood’s Testimony from San Francisco Listening Session
2. Grace Starbird’s Testimony from Alexandria Listening Session
3. Think Tank Report