



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

March 1, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which represents the 629 Area Agencies on Aging and 244 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S., applauds your leadership to sustain our nation's economic recovery and urges you to extend the increase in federal Medicaid matching rates (FMAP) included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) of 2009.

All states have seen an extraordinary acceleration in Medicaid enrollment: 3.28 million Americans have enrolled from June 2008 to June 2009. At the same time that demand for Medicaid is escalating, states have been hobbled by the steepest-ever decline in state revenues. The Recovery Act funds have been vital in helping states to preserve Medicaid eligibility, and to avoid or limit cuts to the program.

This lifeline of funds for Medicaid, however, will end mid-way through most states' 2011 fiscal year budgets (December 31, 2010), when state economies will still be in crisis. Any extension of the Recovery Act funds must include continuation of the maintenance of effort requirements, so that millions of older adults can continue to receive vital home and community-based services benefits. Without the continued Recovery Act funds and maintenance of effort requirements, states may propose cuts to eligibility and deeper cuts to benefits to close large gaps in fiscal year 2011 budgets. Such actions would put the health and independence of millions of older Americans at risk, undermine our nation's health care safety net and create a further drag on the economy just as the economy begins to show signs of recovery.

We urge you to act expeditiously to enact a six-month extension of the Recovery Act Medicaid provisions, and we look forward to continuing our work with you to ensure that older adults' access to health care will not suffer as a result of the economic recession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy Markwood".

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

1730 Rhode Island Ave., NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20036 T. 202.872.0888 F. 202.872.0057 www.n4a.org