



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Biden:

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 United States, applauds your Middle Class Task Force's recent recommendations to significantly invest in community-based programs that support the independence of older Americans and their caregivers.

By proposing increased funding for several Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and services as part of your Caregiver Initiative—specifically, the National Family Caregiver Support Program (Title III E), the corresponding caregiving programs for Native Americans (Title VI C), and the flexible pool of funding for Supportive Services (Title III B)—the Administration is recommending a significant and wise investment in the community-based programs that millions of older adults and caregivers depend on. Coordinated through Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American aging programs in Indian country, these OAA programs provide a wide range of services to struggling caregivers and vulnerable older adults.

The **National Family Caregiver Support Program** (NFCSP) offers a range of services to support family caregivers, including information about services; assistance in gaining access to services; individual counseling, organization of support groups, and caregiver training; respite care; and supplemental services as the limited funding allows. These services are much needed and in high demand in every community. The increased funding for NFCSP recommended in the President's FY 2011 budget will go a long way toward meeting these urgent needs. Ensuring a comparable increase in the **Title VI Native American caregiving program** is also an excellent investment, as elders and

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caregivers in Indian country are historically underserved yet program funds are extremely limited.

n4a also salutes your attention to the newer **Lifespan Respite** program, which aims to improve the provision of respite and other caregiver supports to caregivers of all ages, caring for loved ones across the lifespan. Our members look forward to working with the U.S. Administration on Aging as they begin to build this program.

We particularly thank you for understanding that without a range of home and community-based supports to complement and supplement the help an informal caregiver provides, an older adult may still be at risk of unnecessary institutionalization.

OAA's Title III B, Supportive Services, provides a truly flexible pool of funds so that local AAAs can deliver just what an individual older adult needs to remain independent. This can range from rides to medical appointments, in-home health aides, chore services, help selecting Medicare prescription drug plans, case management and dozens of other options. When older adults can access these supportive services, they are less likely to end up with more expensive and unnecessary institutional care, which often means spending down to Medicaid. It makes more fiscal and human sense to serve people where they are, where they want to stay and to save federal and state governments money while doing it. We are pleased that the Administration's FY 2011 budget recommendation also included increased investment in the comparable Title VI Native American program.

We applaud the work that has been done by the Administration thus far to strengthen long-term living options through home and community-based services, and we look forward to working with your Task Force, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration on Aging to continue to ensure that our nation's older adults and their caregivers receive the supports and services they need...and deserve. n4a will also be working with Congress to ensure that the Administration's recommendations are fully embraced and funded.

Again, thank you for supporting a system and services that truly make a difference in the lives of middle class—as well as all—Americans.

Sincerely,

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

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Kathy Greenlee, Assistant Secretary for Aging