



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

March 19, 2010

The Honorable David Obey
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor/HHS/Education
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Tiahrt, Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

As your Committees consider the FY 2011 Labor/HHS/Education bill in the coming months, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which represents 629 area agencies on aging (AAAs) and 246 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S., urge you to make the programs that help older Americans get the support they need to age successfully at home and in their community a top priority.

To this end, we urge you to:

- **Invest in Older Americans Act (OAA) programs. 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—should be the first step. In order to respond to years of stagnant funding for OAA, as the population, demand for services and inflation continue to grow, however, an increase of at least 12 percent overall will be needed.**
- **Provide adequate resources for Medicare Part D enrollment assistance and counseling by providing \$10 million in FY 2011 funding to AAAs and Title VI Native American aging programs, \$7.5 million to Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), and \$55 million to State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs).**

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

Older Americans Act

Historically, AAAs and Title VI Native American aging programs, along with others in the Aging Services Network, coordinate and/or provide these critical home and community-based services to older adults and their caregivers. This system reflects how people want to age—at home and in the community. It also helps individuals avoid the unnecessary and more expensive institutional care that results in their need to spend down to Medicaid. Given that home and community-based services are estimated to cost one-third of the expense of institutional care, these services save money for federal and state governments. As the older adult population continues to grow, it is critical that Congress place greater emphasis on federal policies and programs that strengthen home and community-based services.

The OAA is the cornerstone of the nation's long-term services and supports system, providing older adults with much-needed services that include home care, congregate and home-delivered meals, adult day care, case management, legal services, transportation and caregiver support.

Unfortunately, **the current economic crisis is making it increasingly difficult for the Aging Services Network to even maintain existing services.** The poor economy is creating increased demand for services, as families struggle to support and care for older relatives and as more older adults struggle to make ends meet. Yet, state budget crises are forcing severe cuts to the very programs that are in place to help this population. State-funded programs for older adults and caregivers—created to wrap around or fill the gaps in federal funds—are facing drastic reductions or even eliminations. Waiting lists are long and growing. This dire situation only intensifies the need for federal investment, both in the short and long terms.

To support older Americans and their caregivers, n4a urges Congress to adopt the following four recommendations.

1. Sustain the capacity of Older Americans Act (OAA) programs by increasing total funding for these programs by at least 12 percent above FY 2010 to allow them to keep pace with projected population growth, price increases and escalating demand in FY 2011.

We particularly 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, as the population, demand for services and inflation continue to grow, an increase of at least 12% overall will be needed.

Although n4a supports at least a 12 percent overall increase in OAA funding, n4a encourages appropriators to give special attention to three OAA programs: Title III B Supportive Services, Title VI Grants for Native Americans and Title III-E National Family Caregiver Support Program.

2. OAA Title III B Supportive Services provides flexible funding to states and local agencies to provide a wide range of needed supportive services to older Americans. Title III B dollars, for example, support senior transportation programs, information and referral/assistance services, case management services, home modification and other housing help, chore services, in-home services for frail elderly and emergency/disaster response efforts targeted to older adults. The flexibility of this funding stream gives agencies greater ability to meet the needs of older adults, as identified at the community level, and often is the bridge between private pay and Medicaid.

→ FY 2011 funding needs to reflect this vital role with an increase for Title III B of at least 13 percent over the FY 2010 level. We support the President's recommendation for \$416,348,000 for III B in FY 2011.

3. OAA Title VI Native American aging programs are especially overdue for a funding increase. OAA provides the primary authority for funding services to elders in Indian country. Older American Indians are

the most economically disadvantaged elders in the nation. Current Title VI funding levels are woefully inadequate to meet the needs of Indian elders—there has long been a lack of proper investment in these programs, which further exacerbates the challenges Indian elders face. According to the National Indian Council on Aging, inadequate funding has made it impossible for many tribes to meet the five-days-a-week home-delivered meal requirement and has forced them to serve congregate meals only two or three days a week. A funding increase of at least 12 percent would begin to address the large gaps in service capacity for these programs and start to remedy the myriad challenges faced by this population.

→ For Title VI A (grants), we ask Congress to go above the President's recommendation of a 7.2 percent increase and get this vital, bedrock program to a funding level of \$31,033,000 (12 percent over FY 2010). For Title VI C (caregiving), we strongly support the President's recommendation for a boost on par with that of Title III E NFCSP increase the Administration has proposed: a 31 percent increase for a total funding level of \$8,389,000.

4. The **National Family Caregiver Support Program** (NFCSP), added to the OAA as Title III-E in 2000, funds programs offered at the community level through the Aging Services Network and their partners, which assist family members caring for their older loved ones who are ill or who have disabilities. The 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 in high demand in every community yet have limited federal resources.

→ We strongly support the President's suggested investment in NFCSP: a 31 percent increase over last year, for a total funding level of \$202,220,000 in FY 2011.

Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Benefit Program

n4a requests that Congress provide discretionary funding under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to AAAs and Title VI Native American aging programs in the amount of \$10 million and to ADRCs in the amount of \$7.5 million in FY 2011 to meet the ever-growing need to provide one-on-one assistance and counseling on Medicare Part D. n4a requests that SHIPs receive funding of \$55 million in FY 2011, a \$10 million increase above FY 2010, in order to effectively continue their Medicare enrollment assistance and one-on-one counseling efforts.

Stabilizing these stable resources under the annual appropriations process will be especially critical as Medicare beneficiaries seek assistance in understanding their prescription drug plan options, especially if any changes to the Part D and Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) programs go into effect.

While we understand the difficult fiscal constraints under which you are operating, we hope you will make every effort to reverse the erosion of—and invest in the future of—the innovative and cost-effective Older Americans Act programs in FY 2011. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Members of the House and Senate Labor/HHS/Education Subcommittees