



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

November 24, 2009

The Honorable George Miller
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Larson
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Miller, Representative Larson, Senator Durbin and Senator Dorgan:

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, urges you to take the following important steps to help create new jobs and stimulate the economy while helping our nation prepare for the largest population of older adults in its history.

We recommend that you target your employment-boosting efforts in the fields that we as a nation have a strategic interest in growing: jobs in the provision of health care and long-term services and supports (LTSS). The current crisis in the health care workforce, coupled with the aging of America, has alarmed policymakers and practitioners for years. That the unemployment rate in health services is 6 percent compared to the overall national unemployment rate of 10 percent further illustrates the reality.

To create the infrastructure needed to support the aging of the population requires investment in the health and long-term services and supports workforce and the need to boost training, retention and career development in these fields has been well documented.¹ Congress has a tremendous opportunity in the coming months to attend to this national priority.

By stimulating jobs in these fields now, the country would not only move toward a sustainable system to support the aging of the boomers, but would also temporarily and permanently assist millions of Americans to obtain jobs in sustainable and much needed fields as data shows these

¹ Institute of Medicine, "Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce," April 14, 2008.

workers will remain in demand for years to come as the need for health and aging services only grows.

Investing in health and LTSS jobs would be mutually beneficial to workers and the clients they would serve. Despite the high unemployment rates, community-based human service programs that serve older adults and persons with disabilities are in need of additional staff in order to meet increasing service demands. These programs provide a range of community services including job training and employment assistance, nutrition, home care, caregiver support, housing, and transportation services, just to name a few.

Investing more in the federal programs that fund these critical initiatives at the community level will spur job growth and stimulate local economies as these programs depend heavily on the private sector, small business and nonprofit communities to provide services and supports. The following are five major areas that will promote sustainable job creation to address the needs of our nation's aging population. The five-point job creation plan would create the following types of jobs:

- 1) **Community Service Jobs for Low-Income Older Adults:** Build on successful American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) efforts by providing an additional investment in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) under the Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA). Ensure that additional resources add supplemental program slots and that created **community service jobs** at day-care centers, senior centers, schools and hospitals are appropriately tracked through local SCSEP projects and reported by the DOL-ETA.
- 2) **Eldercare Workers:** Provide funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III B Supportive Services, administered by the Administration on Aging, to create jobs that will increase the capacity to serve older Americans—such as **home health care aides, case managers, social workers, respite and adult day care workers, and benefits counselors**, among others. Enhance existing ARRA efforts to maintain and expand OAA Title III C Senior Nutrition Programs serving vulnerable older adults in need of basic nutritional supports and accompanying reduction of isolation. Resources would be designated to restore or hire staff to support these programs, including **nutritionists, kitchen staff, and Meals on Wheels drivers**, allowing agencies to expand meal services, address current waiting lists, and refurbish nutrition sites that are rundown and need improvements.
- 3) **Transportation Staff and Mobility Managers:** Provide a one-time infusion of funds under the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled formula grant program to assist community transportation and mobility programs that serve older adults and persons with disabilities. The funds would be flexible enough to use for operating costs to hire new staff including **drivers, schedulers, coordinators, mobility managers** and other needed personnel to expand services to these vulnerable populations in the community who face serious transportation challenges.
- 4) **Service Coordinators for Low-Income Senior Housing Programs:** Provide funds to help local aging and housing programs establish and enhance existing collaborative partnerships to increase the coordination of services such as in-home care, respite care,

homemaker assistance available to individuals under the Section 202 Elderly Housing program in conjunction with local aging services. Funds would be used to hire additional **service coordinators, home care aides, respite caregivers, homemaker aides and contractors** to make home modifications.

- 5) **Planners:** Fund provisions under Section 411 of the Older Americans Act that authorize planning activities to prepare for the aging of communities and coordinate with State and local government, nonprofit and private sector agencies in order to meet the needs of older individuals. Resources would be directed to Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American aging programs to hire **full or part-time planners** to carry out comprehensive planning and coordination efforts, outreach to other agencies, and to develop long-range plans with local and state emergency response agencies.

As Congress prepares critical job creation legislation over the next several weeks, thank you for considering these recommended strategies to create new jobs to stimulate the economy while strategically strengthening our nation's health and LTSS infrastructure, thereby protecting the millions of older Americans and persons with disabilities who rely on these workers and the safety net supports they provide.

Sincerely,



Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Speaker
The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable John Boehner, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable David Obey
The Honorable Jerry Lewis
The Honorable Daniel Inouye
The Honorable Thad Cochran
The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
The Honorable John Olver
The Honorable Tom Latham
The Honorable Christopher Dodd
The Honorable Richard Shelby
The Honorable James Oberstar
The Honorable John Mica
The Honorable Bobby Rush
The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
The Honorable Candice Miller