

April 27, 2020 Advocacy Alert



Urge Lawmakers to Continue Support for Older Adults and Caregivers

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Lawmakers are beginning to consider what comes next following recent congressional action on a limited economic relief bill with nearly \$500 billion in additional funding for small business loan programs, struggling hospital systems, and testing for COVID-19. Earlier this month, **n4a [sent a letter](#) to Senate and House leaders** outlining policy issues that we urge lawmakers to consider as Congress develops another comprehensive relief package. As Congress debates next steps, ***lawmakers must hear from local advocates about how important it is to prioritize programs that provide relief and assistance for vulnerable older adults and caregivers in future emergency funding packages.***

We know that your capacity for advocacy may be limited given your priority on meeting the changing and increasing needs of older adults during this crisis. And so we have created a **[social media advocacy toolkit](#)** focused on the Aging Network's most urgent priorities for this next COVID-19 relief bill for your agency and your grassroots networks.

n4a's Priorities for the Next COVID-19 Relief Package

n4a's requests to Congress build upon the **[significant funding for the Aging Network](#)** that was included in the Families First and CARES Acts and highlight additional funding and policy opportunities that would address ongoing aging services, health care and economic challenges. **Specifically, we hope that Aging Network and grassroots advocates will join n4a in urging Congress to take the following actions!**

- **Expand access to Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver programs and community-living options.** In particular, adopt provisions in the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act of 2020, S. 3544/H.R. 6305, to increase funding for Medicaid HCBS waiver services available to older adults and people with disabilities during this crisis. We also urge Congress to increase federal contributions to state Medicaid programs and to permanently reauthorize the Money Follows the Person program.
- **Increase funding for OAA and other aging programs that can alleviate widespread social isolation and loneliness among older adults observing**

stay-at-home orders. Older adults are at significant risk of negative health implications from prolonged social isolation during the pandemic. We urge lawmakers to include \$80 million to fund technology to keep older adults socially connected, and \$12 million to coordinate and disseminate national and community best practices through the Aging Network to mitigate social isolation.

- **Keep working to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety supplies for the Aging Network workforce.** There is a devastating and widespread shortage of critical PPE for all essential workforces, including PPE for Aging Network professionals who are delivering vital in-home care to medically vulnerable older adults.
- **Ensure Medicare counseling continues virtually.** Congress should provide \$50 million more to State Health Insurance Assistance Programs for technology and infrastructure to ensure they can continue to assist Medicare beneficiaries make the best health care coverage choices—both now and during the fall open enrollment period, when it is likely that most older adults will continue to limit their in-person activities and will need remote assistance.

Action Requested:

→ **Use n4a's [social media toolkit](#) to engage your Senators and Representatives.**

Make sure to tag your lawmakers and urge your agency's stakeholders and advocacy network to do the same!

→ **If you have time, send a more detailed request via email.** Ask your Senators and Representatives to support key policy and funding opportunities to ensure that older adults and caregivers get the services they need to stay safely at home for the duration of the pandemic. Find how to email them on your [Representative's](#) or [Senator's](#) website.

Use n4a's [recent letter to Senate and House leadership](#) as a guide or, for a simplified version that's ready to be customized to your agency, [use our template](#).

→ **If you can, ask other advocates to do the same!** Urge colleagues, advisory board members, volunteers and clients to send [social media messages](#) and make calls to Members of Congress, as well.

Also, we hope you will join n4a's policy team for a [webinar on Wednesday, May 6 at 1:00 p.m. ET](#) to get the latest status update on the next round of COVID-19 legislation and advocacy opportunities. Stay tuned for Aging Network updates about the coronavirus response and resources on [n4a's COVID-19 resource page](#).

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If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert* or n4a's policy positions, please contact Autumn Campbell at acampbell@n4a.org and Amy Gotwals at agotwals@n4a.org.