March 18, 2016

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman, Committee on
Education & the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member, Committee on
Education & the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott:

n4a is pleased to offer our endorsement of your bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA). n4a represents the 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and serves as a voice in the nation’s capital for the 256 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S. On behalf of our members and the millions of older adults and caregivers they serve, thank you for your commitment to securing House passage of this critical legislation.

Thank you also for your commitment to continuing the progress made in the Senate by introducing a bill that reflects the years of work and compromise that lawmakers, advocates and other stakeholders invested in the bipartisan reauthorization process.

As advocates, we recognize that the major demographic challenges ahead for our nation demand increased investment in cost-effective home and community-based services provided under OAA, which help meet the needs of the nation’s increasing older population. We understand that protocols of the House and the Committee dictate that you include authorizing levels that are tied to current funding levels. However, we will continue to work with Congress to ensure that funding adequately reflects the growing needs of the vulnerable older adults served by OAA programs and services.

Our members work on the front lines of aging every day, delivering OAA programs and services that are critical to ensuring that older Americans age with independence, health and dignity in their homes and communities for as long as possible, and they acutely understand the need to increase federal investments in these programs.

Although n4a, like other aging organizations, advocated early on for additions to the Act, we recognize that the overarching priority is achieving bipartisan consensus and support to reauthorize the OAA and
maintain investment in OAA programs that are critical to supporting older adults to remain healthy and independent in their homes and communities. Our members also understand better than most just how well the Act works right now, and that, aside from greater public and private resources, dramatic changes are not necessary at this time.

We greatly appreciate the numerous times you and your staff took into consideration the perspective of AAAs and Title VI programs in reaching a bipartisan consensus bill. n4a is pleased that this bill reflects the Senate’s commitment to exclude unfunded mandates or unnecessarily burdensome requirements on the local agencies charged with responding to the needs of older adults and caregivers in their communities, and that the bill maintains the Act’s essential provisions regarding local flexibility.

n4a looks forward to ensuring that this vital legislation achieves House passage and that the modest changes included in the legislation are quickly advanced in the Senate and move to the President’s desk this spring. We appreciate your commitment to preserving and protecting OAA programs that ensure that older Americans get the support they need to age successfully at home and in their communities.

Sincerely,

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Members of the Committee on Education & the Workforce