West Health Institute Applauds Reauthorization of Older Americans Act

President Obama signs bill to continue funding for critical social and nutrition services for seniors in America through 2018

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SAN DIEGO and WASHINGTON, April 19, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Recognizing today's signing by President Obama of the Older Americans Act (OAA) into law, the Gary and Mary West Health Institute commends elected officials for honoring the nation's commitment to nearly 12 million seniors who will continue to receive critical social and nutrition services, including dental screenings, as a result of the funding measure.

The number of seniors in the United States is projected to grow to 72 million by 2030. Originally enacted in 1965, the OAA supports a range of home and community-based programs, such as Meals on Wheels and other nutritional support; in-home, transportation and legal services; elder abuse prevention and caregivers support.

"Today's action will help seniors, especially those who are most in need, age successfully with dignity, quality of life and independence by continuing to receive vital social and nutrition services on which they depend on a daily basis," said Shelley Lyford, CEO of the West Health Institute and president of the Gary and Mary West Foundation. "This reauthorization includes an often overlooked, but vitally important contributor to good health – oral care screenings, which can lead to early detection and prevention and help avoid more serious health care conditions for our aging population."

In addition to extending the Act's core programs, new provisions in the bill strengthen elder abuse protections, direct the administration to put forward guidelines for caring for Holocaust survivors, support oral health among seniors and promote the modernization of senior centers.

The nonprofit, nonpartisan West Health Institute conducts applied medical research to generate the evidence needed for healthcare providers, policymakers and communities to adopt models of care that better serve seniors and their families. The Institute joined with the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, Meals on Wheels of America, National Council on Aging, Easter Seals, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and other leading organizations in support of passing this important legislation.

About the Gary and Mary West Health Institute
The Gary and Mary West Health Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit medical research organization solely funded by Gary and Mary West to make successful aging a reality for America’s seniors. The Institute works in close collaboration with the related Gary and Mary West Health Policy Center and Gary and Mary West Foundation, using applied medical research, policy and advocacy initiatives and outcomes-based philanthropy from the Foundation to advance healthcare delivery models that enable seniors to age in place, on their own terms, preserving and protecting their dignity, quality of life and independence.

Headquartered in San Diego, the West Health Institute is part of West Health, and shares an office in Washington, D.C. with the nonprofit, nonpartisan Gary and Mary West Health Policy Center. For more information, visit westhealth.org and follow us @westhealth.

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