



advocacy | action | answers on aging

**National Association of
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November 4, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole and
Ranking Member DeLauro:

As your Subcommittees conference the final FY 2016
Labor/HHS/Education appropriations measure in the next few weeks
and reallocate the funding provided under the recent bipartisan budget
deal for FY 2016 and FY 2017, the National Association of Area Agencies
on Aging (n4a), which represents the country's 623 Area Agencies on
Aging (AAAs) and 256 Title VI Native American aging programs, **urges
you to boost funding for the programs that help older
Americans get the support they need to age successfully at
home and in their communities.**

Preserving the ability of millions of older adults to live at home and in
their communities—and thus forgo more restrictive and expensive
institutional care—requires a range of supportive services: home health
care, homemaker services, transportation, respite care, home-delivered
meals and more. Historically, AAAs and Title VI Native American aging
programs in each local community foster the development and
coordination of these critical home and community-based services
(HCBS) to older adults and their caregivers and work with tens of
thousands of service providers and vendors nationwide to deliver these
services efficiently and effectively. This collective community is known
as the Aging Network, and the resulting system of supports help people
where they want to age—at home and in the community.

**The Aging Network also helps individuals avoid unnecessary
and more expensive institutional care and/or spending down
to Medicaid, the result of which saves federal and state
governments money.** As the older adult population grows, it is
critical that Congress place greater emphasis on federal policies and

programs that strengthen HCBS, most particularly discretionary programs like the OAA. The dramatic growth in the number of older individuals in the U.S. means that support services for seniors are more important than ever.

As you approach end-of-year discussions ahead of the December 11 deadline to finalize federal funding levels for the current fiscal year and draft the FY 2016 Labor/HHS/Education bill, we urge you to focus on **restoring eroded funding to all OAA programs; adopting the House-recommended funding level for State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs); and boosting funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs).**

Restore Eroded Funding to All Older Americans Act (OAA) Programs

The OAA is the cornerstone of the nation's HCBS system, providing older adults with much-needed services. These services are in high demand in every community, but limited federal resources have not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals eligible for services.

While n4a supports restoring all OAA programs to at least pre-sequestration FY 2010 funding levels, we encourage appropriators to give special attention to four OAA programs: Title III B Supportive Services, Title VI Grants for Native Americans, Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program and Title VII State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. We also support the House-proposed increases for Title III C nutrition programs.

Title III B Supportive Services:

These programs enable local agencies to deliver a wide range of supportive services to older Americans including, but not limited to, in-home services for frail older adults, senior transportation programs, information and referral/assistance, and case management services to name a few. Title III B funding is flexible, allows AAAs to target and better meet the needs of seniors in the community and is vital to keeping near-low-income seniors from impoverishment and subsequent Medicaid eligibility. **We ask that you use newly allocated dollars to restore III B to at least FY 2010 levels (\$368.3 million), as this line item, which funds two dozen critical aging services, has had no relief from sequestration and other budget cuts since FY10.**

Title VI Grants for Native American Aging Programs:

Title VI is 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 older adults in the nation. Current Title VI funding levels are woefully inadequate to meet the needs of Indian elders. **We appreciate that the FY 2016 Labor-HHS bill takes important steps to recognize the critical needs of this especially vulnerable senior population and to increase funding for**

these programs. We encourage you to, at a minimum, accept the House-proposed increases for Title VI Parts A and C.

Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP):

The NFCSP funds programs offered in the community to assist family members caring for older loved ones who are ill or who have disabilities. The NFCSP offers a range of supports for caregivers, such as information and referral assistance, caregiver training, counseling and support groups and caregiver respite. **The demand for these services is increasing with the growing number of caregivers in every community, and we ask you to restore funding for NFCSP to the FY 2010 level of \$154.2 million, at a minimum.**

Title VII State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program:

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program supports advocates for residents of long-term care facilities in order to resolve quality of life and care problems, including abuse, neglect and exploitation. Ombudsman representatives protect residents' rights and improve the long-term supports and services system. The network has thousands of volunteers and paid staff certified to resolve complaints, but the demand for services is growing. **We ask you to restore funding for these activities to FY 2010 level of \$21.8 million, at a minimum.**

Ensure At Least the House-Recommended Funding Level for State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs)

The work of SHIPs is critical to meeting the ever-growing need to provide one-on-one assistance and counseling on Medicare to beneficiaries at the community level. Now administered by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the SHIP program received \$52.1 million in FY 2015. Two-thirds of local SHIPs are operated through AAAs and rely heavily on trained volunteers to ensure that that older adults and people with disabilities make informed decisions about their Medicare coverage, especially as coverage options under Medicare become increasingly complicated. With 10,000 boomers becoming eligible for Medicare every day, Congress needs to increase SHIP funding to reflect this increasing volume and program complexity. **We encourage you to accept the House-proposed funding level of \$52.1 million for SHIP efforts, rejecting the devastating 42 percent cut to SHIPs in the Senate FY16 Labor-HHS bill.**

Boost Funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)

ADRC systems not only streamline access to LTSS, they also use taxpayer dollars more efficiently by diverting older adults and individuals with disabilities from the most costly forms of care including institutionalization and hospitalization. **We ask that you include at least \$16 million in discretionary funding for ADRCs in FY 2016 to fill the \$10 million gap created by the expiration of mandatory funding provided for ADRCs under the Affordable Care Act for the past five years.** If this gap in funding is not bridged, a decade of improvements and advancements in building this national network will

be undermined. We also support the President's request of \$20 million to expand development of these "No Wrong Door"-model systems that provide a streamlined point of entry for consumers and caregivers seeking information and assistance about public and private options for long-term services and supports (LTSS).

While we have outlined these key programs and services in need of additional appropriations, an April 2015 n4a [letter](#) to Senate and House Appropriators provides more background on these issues and other priority programs that warrant increased federal investment.

We understand the still-difficult fiscal constraints under which you are operating but hope you will make every effort in FY 2016 to prevent the erosion of, and reinforce commitment to, innovative, efficient and cost-effective programs that enable older Americans to live at home and in their communities for as long as possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy Markwood".

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc:

Chairman Thad Cochran, Senate Appropriations Committee
Ranking Minority Member Barbara Mikulski, Senate Appropriations Committee
Chairman Harold Rodgers, House Appropriations Committee
Ranking Minority Member Nita Lowey, House Appropriations Committee
Members of the House and Senate Labor/HHS/Education Subcommittees