



advocacy | action | answers on aging

**National Association of
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April 4, 2019

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

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

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

As your Subcommittees consider the FY 2020 Labor/HHS/Education appropriations in the coming months, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which represents the country's 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and the more than 250 Title VI Native American aging programs, urges you to prioritize Older Americans Act (OAA) and other aging programs that help older Americans get the support they need to age successfully at home and in their communities.

The choices you make about where to direct limited federal resources will determine whether we, as a country, enable a growing population of older adults and caregivers to age with health and independence in their homes and communities where they want to be. If we don't sustain and enhance the current network of home and community-based services (HCBS), we will drive older adults into much more expensive medical and long-term care services paid for by Medicare and Medicaid.

Supporting aging programs is now more important than ever. We are on the steep slope of an unprecedented and long-term shift in our country's age demographics, as the maturing of America's baby boomer generation greatly increases the numbers of older adults. By 2030, 73 million—or one in five—people in America will be 65 or older. Preparing for our demographic destiny requires investments that leverage our existing national assets and infrastructure to serve an aging population with investments that promote access to vital community-based services.

Given the need to invest in critical aging services, we hope that in FY 2020, lawmakers will be committed to a pragmatic budget process and

oppose the arbitrary budget caps and sequestration mechanisms called for in the 2011 Budget Control Act (BCA) that would impact funding for aging and other important human services programs. We also call on lawmakers to reject any attempts by the Administration to further erode funding below those arbitrary caps in the next two years or beyond its 2021 expiration date.

As you continue the process of considering funding requests for FY 2020, we urge you to:

- **Secure a bipartisan budget agreement for FY 2020 and FY 2021** to stop the erosion of vital human needs programs from undermining the health and wellness of older adults. Any agreement must prevent sequester-level cuts and share relief equally between the non-defense and defense discretionary (NDD) categories.
- **Protect the important funding increases** for the Older Americans Act (OAA) and other aging programs that were implemented in FY 2018 and 2019, and **champion additional funding increases for OAA programs**. As the population of older adults and caregivers continues to grow rapidly, we urge Congress in particular to support increases for:
 - **Title III B Supportive Services**
 - **Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program**
 - **Title VI Grants for Native American Aging Programs**
- **Increase funding for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)** and reject cuts or elimination of important SHIP support for Medicare beneficiaries. Ensure that funding levels for SHIP programs adequately reflect and serve the need for these critical and cost-saving services.

Secure a bipartisan budget agreement for FY 2020 and FY 2021

n4a fully understands the economic realities facing governments and families and we support sound federal budget decision-making that values key domestic programs. Furthermore, we believe it is unnecessary and unfair to target NDD programs for cuts to offset defense increases. Savings recouped from deep cuts to critical discretionary programs that support our growing aging population pale in comparison to the costs of premature nursing home placement for seniors who can no longer stay in their homes and communities because Older Americans Act (OAA) and other aging services are inadequately funded to meet their needs.

We encourage Congress to arrive at a long-term budget agreement in FY 2020 that sustains overall budget increases while also rejecting any continuation of the BCA's budget cap and sequestration mechanism.

As the 116th Congress considers FY 2020 federal funding, we acknowledge that there are hard choices ahead for our nation and its leaders. n4a encourages lawmakers and the Administration to have thoughtful conversations about strategies to restore and sustain investments in our nation's most effective federal programs while developing common-sense solutions to address the growing federal debt. The budget-making process should be as free as possible from political gimmicks and allow for honest, transparent debate over national spending—and revenue—priorities.

Protect and Increase Funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) Programs and Services

The OAA is the cornerstone of the nation's non-Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) system, providing older adults with much-needed supports, including in-home care, congregate and home-delivered meals, adult day care, information and referral assistance, case management, transportation, legal services and caregiver support/respite. The demand for these services is growing in every community as the older population continues to grow.

For years, OAA funding has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population eligible for services. This financial reality has made it increasingly difficult for the Aging Network to even maintain existing services, let alone meet escalating need and keep up with a growing population, which increases by thousands each day. In fact, stagnant or declining federal funding since 2010 has eroded the current capacity of the network to address the needs of older adults. It would require a 23 percent funding increase for OAA programs to simply restore the service capacity that has been lost since FY 2010.

In FY 2018, Congress made a nod toward restoring OAA programs to better address the rapidly rising need. As the population of older adults and caregivers continues to grow rapidly, an upward trajectory of these investments must continue: FY 2019's level funding for OAA were insufficient for an aging nation. With more Americans living longer, investing in cost-effective locally provided programs to help seniors remain independent and healthy for as long as possible just makes fiscal sense!

While all subtitles of OAA require swift increases to meet the escalating demand, n4a's members—who administer these programs locally and therefore see first-hand where the pressure points are as the numbers of older adults continues to grow—urge Congress to prioritize increased investments particularly for Title III B Supportive Services, Title VI Native American Aging Programs and Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program.

Perpetually overlooked despite being one of the most-valued sources of funding at the local program delivery level, **Title III B Supportive Services** provides states and local agencies with flexible funding to implement a wide range of needed supportive services to older Americans. Years of eroded funding has resulted in local agencies losing ground in their ability to provide critical III B supportive services, which include in-home services for frail and vulnerable older adults, senior transportation programs, information and referral/assistance services, case management, home modification and repair, chore services, and emergency/disaster response efforts.

Furthermore, inadequate funding for Title III B supportive services undermines the ability of AAAs to facilitate access to other core OAA programs, such as providing older adults with transportation to congregate meals sites. The flexibility of the OAA Title III B funding stream

gives AAAs greater means to meet the needs of older adults, as identified at the community level, and often is vital to keeping seniors from needing expensive nursing home care—which usually leads to their impoverishment and subsequent Medicaid eligibility.

As the demand for and cost of providing services grows significantly each year along with the growth in the population of older adults, we call on Congress and the Administration to prioritize a 20 percent increase for III B in FY 2020 by funding this program at \$462 million.

Title VI Grants to Indians (Native American Aging Programs), Parts A (nutrition services) and C (caregivers) are a primary authority for funding aging services in Indian Country, whose elders are the most economically disadvantaged in the nation. We encourage lawmakers to build on their FY 2018 and FY 2019 recommendations by increasing Title VI appropriations levels given the current and future needs of American Indian elders and the years of insufficient growth in funding to meet escalating need.

Fortunately, it does not require much additional funding to begin this process, given the small size of these programs, so we encourage Congress to boost funding for Title VI Part A (nutrition services) and Part C (family caregiver support) in FY 2020 by at least 20 percent by funding Title VI Part A services at \$41 million and Part C at \$12.1 million.

The **National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)** funds programs offered at the community level through AAAs and their partners that assist family members caring for older loved ones who are ill or who have disabilities. The NFCSP offers a range of in-demand supports to family caregivers in every community. Unpaid family caregivers annually provide more than \$470 billion in uncompensated care—an amount that rivals the entire federal Medicaid budget. Steady and sustained increases for modest federal programs that support the 34 million caregivers for people age 50 and older are essential to prevent billions in additional care costs to taxpayers if their loved ones are placed in a more expensive institutional setting.

For FY 2020, we encourage Congress to increase funding for the National Family Caregiver Support Program by at least 10 percent to \$200 million to better support family caregivers who provide the lion's share of long-term care in this country.

Protect Funding for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)

n4a requests that Congress increase funding for SHIPs in FY 2020 to meet the ever-growing need for one-on-one, objective, assistance and counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. Administered by the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL), and leveraging the work of highly trained volunteers, SHIPs are essential to ensuring that older adults and people with disabilities can make informed decisions about their Medicare coverage and navigate the complicated and shifting landscape of Medicare choices. SHIP counseling assistance can save individual Medicare beneficiaries hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars every year. It's important to note that SHIPs help individuals with complicated situations

who cannot be successfully assisted by 1.800.MEDICARE or www.medicare.gov.

With 10,000 boomers becoming eligible for Medicare every day, n4a calls on Congress to increase SHIP funding to at least \$70 million to reflect the increasing number of clients and the growing complexity of Medicare.

Our additional funding recommendations (for the Elder Justice Act, the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, Chronic Disease Self-Management and Falls Prevention programs, and gap-filling block grants) can be found at www.n4a.org/policypositions (pages 5-9 of *n4a's 2019 Policy Priorities*).

We hope you will make every effort to achieve a bipartisan budget agreement that rejects stringent and counterintuitive budget caps in FY 2020 and beyond. We also hope Congress will continue to prioritize increases for cost-effective, common-sense investments in Older Americans Act and other critical aging programs in FY 2020. There is significant fiscal ground to gain to ensure that these innovative, efficient programs that enable older Americans to live at home and in their communities for as long as possible are adequately funded to address the growing need. Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me or n4a's policy staff at 202.872.0888.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Markwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sandy" being more prominent and the last name "Markwood" following in a similar style.

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc:

Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Committee
Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee
Chairwoman Nita Lowey, House Appropriations Committee
Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee
Members of the House and Senate Labor/HHS/Education Subcommittees