



advocacy | action | answers on aging

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**National Association of
Area Agencies on Aging**

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Honorable New Member
U.S. House of Representatives/U.S. Senate
Office Address
Washington, DC

Dear New Representative/Senator (and key auth/approps leaders):

There may be only one near-universal opinion among the nation's 48 million adults over age 65: an estimated 90 percent of them want to age "in place." This means aging well in their own homes and communities, and not in institutions such as nursing homes. This goal is shared by the baby boomers, of whom 10,000 turn 65 every single day, and it is a commitment that both Republican and Democratic lawmakers have espoused as an important goal.

To help millions of aging Americans meet this goal, local aging agencies develop and provide older adults with the local services and supports necessary to age with health, independence and dignity in their homes and communities. A nationwide Aging Network—made up of states, 622 local Area Agencies on Aging and tens of thousands of service providers—was founded on the principle of giving states and local governments the flexibility to determine, coordinate and deliver the supports and services that most effectively and efficiently serve older adults and caregivers in their communities.

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) serves as the advocacy voice in Washington, DC for the 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and the more than 250 Title VI Native American aging programs. It is on behalf of these vital local entities and the millions of older adults, veterans, caregivers and people with disabilities who they serve, that we are reaching out to you today as you begin your term in the 115th Congress.

n4a hopes to emphasize both the demographics behind the challenges we face as an aging nation and the importance of creating bipartisan and non-partisan policy solutions that enable older adults to age with independence in their homes and communities and support their caregivers in those goals.

We also hope you will rely on us and the local Area Agencies on Aging in your district/state as issue-area experts on both the challenges and opportunities facing older adults and caregivers, as well as policy experts you may wish to consult, as you develop policy solutions affecting seniors in every community.

Demographics Demand Focus on Aging Issues

If you are not already aware, the 115th Congress and the Trump Administration will face the steep slope of an unprecedented and long-term shift in the composition of our country's age demographics ushered in by the maturing of America's baby boomer generation. In the next four years, nearly 15 million people will turn age 65. By 2030, 73 million—or one in five—people in America will be 65 or older.

Many rural areas in every region of the country are already grappling with the challenges of this historic population shift, with ratios of older adults far exceeding the current national average, and available services unable to keep pace with the growing need.

These demographic milestones are not simply blips on the U.S. Census radar. They are mile-markers on a longer road toward a significantly older nation. It is critical that lawmakers at all levels of government recognize that, unlike at any other point in our history, demographics demand and must drive, our nation's aging policy.

For more on demographics and the top aging issues we hope you will pay close attention to, please see our recent n4a Policy Brief, [What Policymakers Must Know about an Aging America](#)

(link: http://www.n4a.org/Files/n4a_PolicyBrief_WhatPolicymakersMustKnow_Jan2017_final.pdf).

Two Pressing Aging Issues

n4a and our members look forward to working with you and your staff in the coming months on important policy initiatives that have implications for millions of older adults and caregivers across the country. In March, we will release our association's *2017 Policy Priorities* that detail how current aging and health care policy under consideration in Congress and a new Administration could affect older adults and the agencies that enable them to age with dignity and health in their homes and communities.

However, as you and your colleagues consider policy proposals in the coming weeks and months, particularly as those proposals affect health care access and availability for millions of older adults and funding for all federal programs, we encourage you to keep the following realities in mind.

Affordable Care Act Repeal and Replacement Efforts Must Protect Access to Critical Protections and Services for Millions of Older Adults

Repealing the ACA with no plan to replace it—or a plan that provides insufficient protections for health care providers and beneficiaries—could harm millions of seniors and families. Dismantling the federal insurance exchange marketplace; repealing Medicaid expansion in states; rolling back or eliminating efforts to spur delivery systems innovation and reform through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI); and defunding disease prevention and health promotion through the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) would all have significant consequences for millions of older adults—even if they are not directly

participating in the Marketplace or affected by Medicaid expansion. Subsequently, AAAs and other CBOs that serve older adults and caregivers in their homes and communities would be affected both by an aging population with declining access to health care, as well as potential reduction in rebalancing efforts and improvements in integration of health and community-based care across the country.

Additionally, the ACA includes critical health and economic protections for millions of older adults and caregivers, and key efforts to extend Medicare solvency. It is important that you and your colleagues consider these economic implications. Repealing the ACA would eliminate efforts to close the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap for up to nine million Medicare beneficiaries, exacerbating already difficult economic decisions for many vulnerable seniors. The ACA also includes spousal impoverishment protections under Medicaid providing critical safeguards so that families do not have to spend essential financial resources for basic needs on Medicaid LTSS services. Nationally, the ACA also implemented policy changes to extend the solvency of the Medicare Part A Hospital Insurance Trust Fund by 11 years. Reversing these changes could set Medicare and the fiscal future of the federal budget on a more precarious path.

For more information on what ACA repeal means for efforts to support aging in place, please see n4a's recent Policy Brief, [What Would ACA Repeal Mean for Older Adults, Caregivers and the Aging Network?](#)

(link: http://www.n4a.org/files/ACA_PolicyBrief_Jan2017_final.pdf).

Recognize and Make Wise Federal Investments in Programs that Keep Older Adults in Their Homes and Communities and that Support Caregivers:

We encourage the 115th Congress to work toward a comprehensive, balanced approach to federal debt and deficit challenges, and entirely reject extending or expanding strategies embraced in the Budget Control Act of 2011. Under the BCA, discretionary programs have borne an unduly onerous burden toward deficit reduction, producing nearly all of the trillions of dollars of deficit reduction of the past five years. This portion of the federal budget, which unlike the mandatory programs is not driving the longer-term fiscal issues, must be more responsibly addressed by the new Congress and incoming Administration. Starving one part of the federal budget while not addressing the mandatory spending and revenue columns is short-sighted and unsustainable. We encourage lawmakers to eliminate budget caps and the stifling, continued threat of sequestration for non-defense discretionary programs.

We also encourage Congressional leadership to embrace the commitment made in the Republican National Platform to support opportunities for aging in place. Specifically, we urge lawmakers to consider critically needed increases for Older Americans Act (OAA) and other Administration on Aging (AoA) programs within the Health and Human Services (HHS) FY 2018 budget. Current funding, and recent Presidential budget requests, for OAA and other discretionary aging programs have lagged the growing population, need, and cost for these services and supports.

Simply put, Area Agencies on Aging and other community-based service providers are constantly faced with serving more people with fewer resources, and this situation has only worsened in the past five years. Congress can make a bold statement about supporting older adults and caregivers and capitalize on a return on investment by boosting the request for OAA and other aging programs to meet both the population and cost growth for these services. At a

minimum, we encourage Congress to honor the modest increases for OAA funding that Congress unanimously passed in the 2016 OAA reauthorization. However, it must be recognized that much more substantial increases in OAA funding are needed to even begin to accommodate the current and growing need for these critical programs. Because our members direct these federal programs locally, n4a is uniquely positioned and stands ready to help educate you and your team on OAA programs and services.

Changes to the Affordable Care Act and decisions about FY 2017 and 2018 funding for federal programs are the two most immediate aging policy challenges that Congress faces. However, in the months and years ahead, we encourage policy makers to pursue significant but achievable strategies to jump-start policy solutions and preserve best practices to improve support for older adults and caregivers in their communities. We look forward to working with you as you embrace these challenges.

In pursuing these critical solutions, we again urge Congress to recognize and partner with the successful, efficient, long-standing nationwide Aging Network that supports and serves older adults and caregivers in their homes and communities.

Please feel free to reach out anytime to n4a's policy staff, Amy Gotwals, Chief, Public Policy & External Affairs, (agotwals@n4a.org) and Autumn Campbell, Director, Public Policy & Advocacy, (acampbell@n4a.org), or call at 202.872.0888, on these or any aging issues of importance to you and your constituents.

Sincerely,

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

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer