March 20, 2015

Do Your Part to Boost Funding for OAA!
Ask Your Senators and Representatives to Sign the Letters Requesting Increased Older Americans Act Funding

Our March 16 Advocacy Alert let you know about Senator Bernie Sanders’ (I-VT) efforts to engage his fellow Senators in requesting a 12 percent increase for all Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and services in FY 2016. A week of advocacy has translated into 7 more Senators on board, and there’s still time to educate your Senators about why OAA desperately needs additional funding. SENATE Sanders Letter.

Now we have a similar opportunity to push for OAA increases in the House of Representatives! After encouragement from his local AAA, Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-FL) joined with Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) to circulate a “Dear Colleague” letter in the House, urging the other Representatives to join them in support of the Administration’s request for major increases to OAA Title III B Supportive Services (11 percent) and Title III C Nutrition Services (7.4 percent). HOUSE Murphy-Deutch Letter.

This is our chance to show that there is support for the vital OAA programs and services the Aging Network implements daily in every community, supporting millions of older adults’ independence, health and well-being, as well as supporting their caregivers. But Congress needs to hear from you and all the other stakeholders in your area if they are to make OAA funding a priority!

Both letters, while slightly different in their “asks,” are fantastic efforts by congressional champions to help you help seniors with increased federal investment. We have three days left to support them by recruiting other Senators and Representatives to sign on to the respective letters by Wednesday, March 25.

Action Needed:

STEP 1: If you haven’t already, contact both of your Senators and ask them to sign on to the letter circulated by Senator Sanders on OAA funding. Even if you know enough about your Senator’s voting history to understand your request is not an easy one, please do this outreach anyway. It’s vital that all Senators understand how critical OAA funding is to older adults and caregivers!
STEP 2: Reach out immediately to any and all House members who have constituents living in your planning and service area. Many Representatives do not know the first thing about how OAA helps people in their community, so it’s critical that you bring this opportunity to their attention and urge them to sign the Murphy-Deutch letter.

STEP 3: Spread the word and ask other advocates to do the same! Urge colleagues, advisory board members, volunteers and clients to make calls to their Senators and Representative(s), as well. We have a short window of opportunity, so we need you and your colleagues to act fast!

Here’s How to Reach Out:

1. **Call the DC office** and ask for the staff member who handles Older Americans Act or appropriations issues. You can reach them through the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

2. **Identify yourself and your agency.** Tell them you are calling to urge their boss to sign on to the letter circulating in that chamber. Then share a few powerful sentences or statistics on how OAA allows you to support the independence and health of their constituents. Mention how sequestration has reduced services as you face increased demand. *(You can also provide a longer version of your pitch by using the email forms on the Member's website, but in the interest of time, we are urging calls be your first step.)*

3. **If they haven’t heard of the letter,** ask for their email so you can mail them a link *(copied from this Alert!)*. Remind them that the deadline is close of business on Wednesday, March 25.

4. **Close by providing the staff contact information** they need to sign the letter.
   - **SENATE Sanders Letter:** Sophie Kasimow, 202.224.5480.
   - **HOUSE Murphy-Deutch Letter:** Aimee Collins-Mandeville, 202-225-3026

A few updates and notes:

- **Current Signers of the Sanders Letter:** Senators Brown, Durbin, Whitehouse, Baldwin, Leahy, Wyden, Casey, Stabenow, Menendez, Boxer, Shaheen, Schumer, Gillibrand, Tester, Murphy, Blumenthal, and Manchin. *(Note: If your Senator is on this list, please generate calls of thanks to his/her office!)*

- Both letters serve as reminders that OAA programs require increased resources to maintain current programs due to population growth, cost inflation and sequestration cuts. n4a’s FY 2016 OAA appropriations request to Congress is built upon that same premise and, very soon, we will launch our annual OAA Appropriations Campaign to help you make the case with your Members of Congress on our shared priorities (which include prioritizing OAA III B, III E and Title VI programs). In the meantime, n4a strongly supports both letters.
Signatures are due by close of business on Wednesday, March 25 so please do your outreach and any follow-up today and early next week.

If you have questions about this Advocacy Alert, please contact n4a’s policy team: Amy Gotwals and Autumn Campbell, 202.872.0888.