



Advocacy**ALERT** FOR n4a MEMBERS & ALLIES

Tell Lawmakers to Reject Budget and Health Care Cuts!

Trump Budget Cuts Risk Seniors' Independence, Economic Security, Safety

May 25, 2017

This week, President Trump released his first full budget, for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018—a document that traditionally sets an Administration's policy and spending goals for the year. n4a's May 23 [Legislative Update](#) details the budget proposals that could significantly affect programs and services that support older adults and caregivers in every community. While a President's budget is often a symbolic request to Congress—appropriators in the House and Senate ultimately write spending bills—the cuts that the President is proposing to a panoply of federal programs that support vulnerable seniors would have devastating consequences.

The President's budget does not directly cut the core Older Americans Act programs, but it does slash funding for—or completely eliminate—many key federal programs that help Area Agencies on Aging and other community-based organizations ensure that low-income older adults can meet their basic needs, find jobs to make ends meet, give back to their communities through volunteerism, get one-on-one help understanding their Medicare and other benefits, and live independently at home and in the community, avoiding more expensive nursing home care. And if that's not enough to be concerned about, the budget cuts Medicaid—the country's primary safety-net health and long-term care program—by \$610 billion over 10 years.

Please reach out to your Members of Congress *immediately* to share your concerns with the cuts proposed by the Trump Administration! Use [n4a's template letter](#) and talking points to contact your Members of Congress to share your concerns, but please also **make sure that you add local information** about how these cuts would affect the services you provide in your community!

AND please widely engage your grassroots! n4a has also prepared a [template alert](#) that you can use with your grassroots partners as well as consumers—the language in the template alert is ready-made for a more general audience of aging advocates and consumers, making it easy for them to reach out to Congress! **It is more critical than ever that aging advocates weigh in with Congress** about the importance of the federal programs that drive local innovation and provide life-saving home and community-based services to our nation's most vulnerable older adults and their caregivers.

How to Take Action:

→ STEP 1: Put Your Concerns in Writing to Congress!

n4a has prepared a [template letter](#) that you can use to put your agency's concerns in writing. If you can, put this letter on your agency's letterhead and email and/or fax it to your Representatives and Senators. You can find your Members' fax numbers on their websites (www.house.gov and www.senate.gov) and you can often email them right from that same site. If you have staff contacts in the district, state and Washington, DC offices, make sure to send your outreach to them as well!

→ STEP 2: Ask Your Agency's Stakeholders and Grassroots to Do the Same!

Federal lawmakers must hear from as many people as possible who would be hurt by the President's proposed budget cuts—and personal stories will make a difference! [n4a has created a template alert](#) that you can use to send to your agency's stakeholders, including your advisory board, your providers and the seniors and caregivers you serve, to help them reach out to Congress. Constituents should write to and call Congress and share their concerns about how President Trump's budget would hurt their ability to live independently in their communities!

→ STEP 3: Find Other Ways to Engage and Educate Your Community!

There are many other ways your agency can get the word out about value of critical programs that serve older adults, and the harm that deep cuts or elimination would do.

- **Submit an Opinion-Editorial to your local paper or engaging your local media in other ways.** Consider using [n4a's template letter](#) as a starting point to talk about how cuts would hurt your community.
- **Members of Congress are on recess next week!** Engage your Members while they are in their districts and states by attending a local town hall or encouraging them to visit your programs to see the great work you do in-person.

Key Talking Points on the 2018 Trump Budget:

Medicaid is Critical to the Health and Well-Being of Many Older Adults

- The Trump budget builds on the cuts in the House-passed American Health Care Act (AHCA) and further cuts Medicaid by \$610 billion, both acute care and long-term care. It does this by capping the amount of money the federal government contributes to Medicaid, which means states will be on the hook to cover federal cuts. States cannot absorb these costs!
- When states can't cover the difference, it will undermine seniors' access to long-term care like nursing homes or home and community-based services and supports.
- Medicaid pays 60 percent of long-term care—more than any other source!
- **[CUSTOMIZE! AAAs and providers: add a bullet about the number of HCBS clients you serve or give examples of the types of life-sustaining services your agency offers locally!]**
- The cuts in the Trump budget (AHCA) could result in higher Medicaid costs and reduced care, including co-pays and premiums for consumers, waiting lists for services.

- We must preserve Medicaid’s safety net guarantee in order to keep older adults healthy and living safely in their homes and communities!

Medicare Is Complicated, so Save Our SHIPs!

- The President’s Budget proposes to eliminate the federal State Health Insurance Assistance program (SHIP). In every state, SHIPs provides one-on-one assistance and counseling to Medicare beneficiaries whose complex needs require more help than is provided by 1-800-Medicare or medicare.gov.
- [CUSTOMIZE! AAAs and providers: if SHIP is called something else in your state, amend this section to reflect that, add how many people you served last year, etc.]
- SHIPs rely heavily on highly-trained volunteers and play a critical role in ensuring that older adults and people with disabilities make informed decisions about their Medicare coverage and navigate the complicated and shifting landscape of Medicare choices.
- If SHIPs are eliminated as proposed in this budget, there will be no federally funded program handling people’s complicated Medicare questions one-on-one, and no way to get objective, trusted help in picking a plan.

Flexible Block Grants Drive Funding Where It’s Needed

- Three major block grant programs would be eliminated by the Trump Administration. All are designed to send federal dollars to states or localities to invest in those communities, to shore up underfunded human service or infrastructure efforts and to provide resources unavailable elsewhere—and allow communities flexibility to decide what is needed most! Here are just a few ways this bedrock federal funding is used for aging services...
 - The *Social Services Block Grant*, is used by many states to run their Adult Protective Services efforts—without this funding stream, vulnerable older adults will be at greater risk of abuse.
 - The *Community Services Block Grant*, also proposed for elimination, helps local Older Americans Act programs run by Area Agencies on Aging and providers provide more people with meals, rides to the doctor and help living independently.
 - The *Community Development Block Grant*, works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our community. Some localities use this funding to supplement their existing home-delivered meals programs.
- [CUSTOMIZE! AAAs and providers: if you know you receive funding from one or all of these block grants, amend this section to say what you do with it and how it helps your clients.]
- The President’s budget does not cut the core Older Americans Act programs (one bright spot!) but if these lesser-known but still important block grants are eliminated, significant local aging resources will dry up. Older Americans Act can’t absorb that demand and even seniors currently getting meals or in-home help could lose out.

Workforce, Volunteer Programs Especially Needed as America Ages

- [Again, CUSTOMIZE to what’s available in your area and what effect zero federal funding would have!]
- The *Senior Community Service Employment Program* (Title V of the Older Americans Act), would also be eliminated in the Trump budget. Losing this program—the only federal job training program focused on the unique needs of older workers—would immediately affect the approximately 70,000 age 55+

workers who receive skills training, job placement help and subsidized community service jobs annually.

- Finally, the budget eliminates the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent agency which runs the long-standing, popular *Senior Corps* programs, specifically Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions and RSVP. Senior Corps is the only national program able to place large numbers of senior volunteers in high-quality volunteer positions, generating 96 million hours of service to communities.

To learn more about what is in the President's budget, **join us tomorrow, Friday, May 26 at Noon ET for a federal policy webinar** on federal funding and health care debates.

If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert* or n4a's policy positions, please contact Autumn Campbell at acampbell@n4a.org and Amy Gotwals at agotwals@n4a.org.