This Older Americans Month, Tell Congress to Keep Seniors Safe Today and Healthy Tomorrow!  
Support Funding for Elder Falls Prevention and the Elder Justice Initiative  
May 9, 2014

The theme for Older Americans Month 2014 is *Safe Today, Healthy Tomorrow*, and there are at least two important actions that Congress can take now to ensure that older adults stay safe and healthy today, tomorrow and every day. Lawmakers are currently developing FY 2015 spending bills, and we urge you to contact your Representatives and Senators to tell them to support robust funding for evidence-based Elder Falls Prevention and the Elder Justice Initiative. Both programs aim to ensure that seniors age safely, successfully and stay healthy in their homes and in their communities and supplement all the other prevention and wellness work already being carried out by the Aging Network.

**Elder Falls Prevention**

Falls are the leading cause of injuries among adults 65 and older. Annually, 1 in every 3 seniors will fall, resulting in medical costs of over $36 billion. Yet, the federal government spends only about $7 million a year to prevent falls among older adults. This problem will only get worse as the population of older adults increases. Evidence-based prevention programs have been shown to be effective tools to both increase awareness of and reduce the rates and medical costs resulting from senior falls.

As part of n4a’s 2014 Policy Priorities, released last month, n4a supports the Administration’s FY 2015 proposal to allocate at least $5 million in funding from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) for falls prevention activities at the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL). These proven evidence-based health promotion programs, which have been extensively tested and operated by AAAs and service providers, are an essential tool to promote senior safety and health and reduce Medicare and Medicaid costs.

**Elder Justice Initiative**

An estimated 10 percent of older Americans—approximately 5 million people—experience one or more forms of abuse each year, and that number is expected to increase as the senior
population grows. However, federal investments in elder justice activities lack both designated agency leadership and financial support. There is still no comprehensive system to coordinate elder abuse prevention, response and assistance activities. Split among the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Justice, federal investment in Adult Protective Services and Elder Justice Programs totals only $11.9 million annually. This is compared to the billions invested each year in child and family protective services. As the first important step to better understand, prevent and respond to elder abuse, the Obama Administration has proposed, and n4a supports, $25 million for the Elder Justice Initiative to fund elder justice and Adult Protective Services programming, evaluation, research and screening.

Advocacy Needed

Congress has the opportunity through the FY 2015 appropriations process to prioritize senior safety and health by funding both of these efforts. National Aging Network organizations including AAAs/Title VIs, tribes, local service providers, community-based organizations and older adults and caregivers across the country are calling on lawmakers to fund these efforts critical the safety and health of seniors.

To ensure that these safety priorities get the attention they deserve, we need Members of Congress to share a similar message with their colleagues on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. This is where you come in!

Action Requested:

➔ Contact your Representatives and Senators to advocate for funding for Elder Falls Prevention and the Elder Justice Initiative programs and services. Especially take the time to localize what this funding means for the older adults and people with disabilities in your state and community. Also use n4a’s FY 2015 appropriations campaign tools to help!

STEP 1: Reach out to your Senators and Representatives. The House will be in recess May 12-16 and May 23-27; the Senate will be in recess May 26-30. Attend any public events/town halls they are hosting during the May recesses and raise these issues and/or email their local and DC offices. (U.S. Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121. Email: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov)

STEP 2: Ask other advocates to do the same! Urge colleagues, advisory board members, volunteers and clients to make calls and write emails to their legislators, as well.

STEP 3: Invite Members to Safe Today, Healthy Tomorrow Older Americans Month events you are hosting. This is a great opportunity to educate your elected officials about senior safety and health programs your agency operates and the critical services you provide to their constituents.

If you have questions about this Advocacy Alert, please contact n4a’s Public Policy and Advocacy team, Amy Gotwals and Autumn Campbell at 202.872.0888 or agotwals@n4a.org, acampbell@n4a.org.