

# The **Future** of Aging Is **Now**

Every year, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, which represents America's national network of 622 Area Agencies on Aging and provides a voice in the nation's capital for the more than 250 Title VI Native American aging programs, develops a set of its top policy priorities that guide our legislative and administrative advocacy efforts for the year.

As a nation we are no longer *preparing* for an historic demographic shift—we are, in fact, deeply immersed in the challenges, realities, necessities and opportunities of an aging society. This demographic reality must inform both micro and macro discussions as we embark on policy debates and decisions across a spectrum of critical issues. 2020 marks nearly a decade since the baby boomer generation began turning 65 and every day, 10,000 boomers reach this milestone. By 2030, 73 million—or one in five—people in America will be age 65 or older—the entirety of the baby boomer generation. By mid-century, the number of older adults is expected to reach 85 million.<sup>1</sup>

2020 offers advocates and policymakers alike the opportunity to both focus on the immediate aging and health care policies critical to older adults and caregivers and reflect on big-picture societal and demographic trends that will drive policy in our aging nation. Furthermore, as we move into a new decade and a new demographic normal, we must reconsider our collective construct about the value

of an aging society. We will be unable to address big-picture challenges and capture emerging opportunities that an aging nation presents if we remain mired in outdated stereotypes about aging.

n4a's *2020 Policy Priorities* reflect both a comprehensive charge to consider cross-cutting societal issues affecting older Americans throughout the country, and targeted priorities based on input received from our members who are directly supporting older adults and caregivers in their communities.

**But in order for a rapidly growing population to age successfully at home and in the community, many facets of society must provide reliable supports. This cross section of needs includes, but is not limited to, accessible transportation, affordable housing and long-term care options, a well-trained and available caregiving workforce, a person and family-centered approach to providing services, and attainable and effective technology solutions.**

Preparing for our nation's demographic destiny requires solutions that leverage our existing national assets and infrastructure to serve an aging population with innovations in policy and investment that promote access to vital home and community-based services.

It is in this spirit that n4a calls on policymakers and leaders to use the opportunity that 2020 provides to ambitiously consider how each of these broader societal realities affect older adults, caregivers and their ability to age with health, dignity and independence in their homes and communities.