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**National Association of  
Area Agencies on Aging**

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May 7, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair  
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair  
The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairwoman  
DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

On behalf of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which represents the country's 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and the more than 250 Title VI Native American aging programs, we are reconnecting with you and your colleagues as you continue considering long-term FY 2021 appropriations in this unprecedented coronavirus pandemic era.

As we hope you are aware, Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI aging programs across the country are on the front lines responding to the needs of older adults who are especially vulnerable during the coronavirus pandemic. **n4a and our members greatly appreciate Congress' support of older adults' safety and independence** through the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) in March, the emergency funding for nutrition services provided via the Families First and CARES Acts, and funding for additional supportive services, family caregiver supports, and ombudsman and elder justice activities included in the CARES Act. We are continuing to work with key congressional staff and leaders to [identify ongoing opportunities](#) to adequately address the needs of vulnerable older adults and caregivers as this crisis unfolds.

We commend Congress and the Administration for prioritizing funding for vital home and community services for older adults as the country grapples with this unprecedented health and economic crisis. As you look toward developing longer-term FY 2021 funding measures, we urge you to continue prioritizing funding for Older Americans Act

(OAA) and other aging programs that help older Americans and their caregivers access the support they need to age successfully at home and in their communities—especially at a time when aging at home is the safest option for vulnerable older adults. We realize that spending caps established in last year’s bipartisan budget agreement significantly limit overall non-defense discretionary funding.

However, to allow lawmakers to sufficiently respond to the unforeseen global economic and health emergency resulting from the coronavirus, ***we urge Congress to ensure that existing and short-sighted budget caps do not inhibit federal investments in vital aging and health care services.*** In these extraordinary and historic times, federal leaders should not be unnecessarily restricted by budget caps enacted nearly a decade ago and must be able to make necessary investments to protect the safety and health of America’s seniors and caregivers.

Furthermore, we must continue to enhance the current network of home and community-based services (HCBS) or risk driving older adults into much more expensive and riskier medical and institutional settings. ***Given all that older adults are facing amidst this pandemic, n4a believes, our asks of you for FY 2021 from early March ([see n4a’s March 6 appropriations letter](#)) are more important than ever.***

Specifically, as you consider funding levels for FY 2021, we urge you to:

- ***Implement the funding recommendations included for all programs in the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020, P.L. 116-131,*** to invest in critical OAA services and supports at a level that more adequately addresses national needs of a growing population and the importance of these services to maintain the health of older adults during the coronavirus pandemic.
- ***Prioritize funding increases to vital wrap-around supportive and caregiver services within the Act.*** As the population of older adults and caregivers continues to grow rapidly and as more older Americans require an array of in-home services to safely physically distance during the pandemic, we urge Congress to, at a minimum, provide funding for:
  - ***Title III B Home and Community-Based Supportive Services at \$436,750,931;***
  - ***Title III D Evidence-Based Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Programs at \$28,182,602;***
  - ***Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program at \$205,501,161; and***
  - ***Title VI Grants for Native American aging programs nutrition services at \$39,298,714 and caregiver supports at \$11,405,515.***
- ***Increase funding for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to, at a minimum, \$70 million*** and reject cuts to important SHIP support for Medicare beneficiaries. SHIPs are essential to ensuring that older adults and people with disabilities can make informed decisions about their Medicare coverage and

navigate the complicated and shifting landscape of Medicare choices—especially at a time when access to affordable health care options is increasingly essential. SHIP counseling assistance can save individual Medicare beneficiaries hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars every year.

- ***Extend funding for the National Community Care Corps at the Administration for Community Living*** based on its FY 2019 level and the ongoing efforts to fund innovative models for using volunteers to perform non-medical tasks that will reduce caregiver burden. Innovative, volunteer-driven service models will become increasingly important in the wake of the current health care crisis, and we urge Congress to continue investments in existing efforts to foster new models of care and community engagement.
- ***Invest in other critical programs and services that support community aging and the independence and health of older adults and caregivers.*** Again, we echo the funding requests included in [n4a's March letter](#) to continue prioritizing investments in transportation, elder justice, community development, and other social safety net programs that allow state and local governments to prioritize the needs of older Americans in every community across the country

We hope Congress will continue to prioritize increases for cost-effective, common-sense investments in Older Americans Act and other critical aging programs in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and into FY 2021. These innovative, efficient programs are more important than ever to enabling older Americans to live safely at home and in their communities for as long as possible. Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or n4a's policy staff at 202.872.0888.

Sincerely,



Sandy Markwood  
Chief Executive Officer

cc:

Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Chairwoman Nita Lowey, House Appropriations Committee  
Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee  
Members of the House and Senate Labor/HHS/Education Subcommittees