



advocacy | action | answers on aging

October 11, 2018

**National Association of
Area Agencies on Aging**

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The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman
Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

We are writing to thank you for your bipartisan, bicameral leadership in securing FY 2019 Labor/HHS/Education appropriations that provides critical funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) and other essential aging programs. The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) represents the country's 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and more than 250 Title VI Native American aging programs.

On behalf of our membership that strives to provide older Americans and their caregivers the support they need to age successfully at home and in their communities, we appreciate that Members of Congress finalized funding for OAA and other aging programs that maintained FY 2018 increases and even provided additional investments for key aging services. We also commend your commitment to finalizing full-year funding measure before the start of the 2019 fiscal year, which will greatly alleviate budget uncertainty that affects AAAs and local service providers when short-term federal funding compromises are implemented. More information about n4a's membership and overall FY 2019 appropriations priorities is available in our [April 2018 letter to Congress](#).

Increased Investments in Key Aging Programs

n4a and other Aging Network stakeholders were so pleased to see that the final FY 2019 funding measure boosted funding for **OAA Title III Nutrition Services Programs** (\$5 million for Home-Delivered Meals and \$5 million for Congregate Meals), as well as **OAA Title VI Native**

American aging programs (\$1.5 million). Title VI programs serve elders in Indian country and older American Indians who are the most economically disadvantaged elders in the nation. Modest but programmatically significant increases are much needed—and very appreciated. Furthermore, we appreciate that lawmakers boosted investments in the **National Senior Volunteer Corps Program** (RSVP, Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions) for the first time in 10 years—increasing it by \$6 million.

All of these programs are critical to enabling over 11 million older adults and caregivers to maintain independence at home and in the community and also help to ensure that the Aging Network and other community organizations can fulfill their volunteer requirements and maintain service capacity.

Along with Senior Corps programs, we commend lawmakers for preserving and/or providing modest increases for other federal programs that support older adults and caregivers across the country. These key block grant programs include the **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**, which received a \$10 million increase; **the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**, which received a \$50 million boost; and the **Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)**, which was protected from Administration-proposed elimination.

Protecting Key Services for Older Adults

We applaud lawmakers for rejecting proposals in the Trump Administration's FY 2019 budget request to cut and eliminate a number of critical aging programs—including, but not limited to, the **State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)** and the **OAA Title V Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)**.

SHIP programs work to meet the growing need to provide one-on-one assistance and Medicare counseling to beneficiaries. These programs 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—assistance that can save individual Medicare beneficiaries hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars every year. *We appreciate that Congress preserved the \$49.1 million allocation to SHIP, and encourage lawmakers to work, in future years, toward fully restoring funding for the program after previous cuts.*

The SCSEP is the *only* federal job training program focused exclusively on helping older Americans return to the workforce. Each year, more than 60,000 older workers from nearly all U.S. counties develop new skills, add relevant work experiences, and strengthen aging and other local programs through their SCSEP on-the-job training and community service assignments. *We applaud Congress for rejecting proposed cuts to the program in FY 2019, and encourage lawmakers to work toward also finding opportunities to restore full funding for these activities following recent cuts.*

New Investments in Critical Caregiver Support Programs

n4a applauds Congress for including new funding for several recent bipartisan initiatives aimed at improving support for the essential, unpaid, informal caregiving workforce. Collectively, caregivers provide over \$470 billion of unsubsidized care to older adults and people with disabilities every year—a number that rivals the entirety of the annual Medicaid budget. We appreciate that lawmakers approved a total increase of \$600,000 for the **OAA Title V Family Caregiver Support Program** to implement the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act and the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act, which were both supported by n4a.

We also appreciate the \$5 million increase to **OAA Title II Aging Network Support Activities** to begin implementing the bipartisan demonstration effort outlined in the Care Corps Demonstration Act of 2017 (H.R. 3493) to establish programs within public and private non-profit agencies to augment the volunteer force supporting caregivers and older adults. It is critical that we continue to build upon and improve opportunities within the Older Americans Act to reach the essential, although often overlooked, informal caregiving workforce.

Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III B Supportive Services

Included in final FY 2018 appropriations that passed in March 2018, lawmakers approved a notable \$35 million, 10 percent, boost to **OAA Title III B Supportive Services**. The OAA—especially, OAA III B program—is the cornerstone of the nation’s non-Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) system. Title III B services provide older adults with much-needed supports, including in-home care, adult day care, information and referral assistance, case management, transportation, legal services and caregiver support/respite. These services are in high demand by older adults and caregivers in every community, but have very limited federal resources.

Specifically, Title III B Supportive Services provides flexible funding to states and local agencies to deliver a wide range of needed supportive services to older Americans. In a recent survey of n4a members, Title III B services were reported to be the highest in demand and were the most reported type of service to have a waiting list across the AAAs surveyed. The flexibility of this funding stream gives AAAs greater means to meet the needs of older adults, as identified at the community level, and often is vital to keeping near-low-income seniors from impoverishment and subsequent Medicaid eligibility.

For more information about the programs that OAA Title III B funds, and examples of how important it is to individuals, please see n4a’s issue brief about Title III B:
http://www.n4a.org/files/OAA%20IIIB%20One-Pager_final.pdf

We greatly appreciate that the final FY 2018 funding bill included a significant increase to Title III B funding, and that the final FY 2019 bill preserved this increase. We hope we can continue to work with lawmakers to find opportunities to make additional investments in

cost-effective and efficient Title III B services to augment local capacity to meet the panoply of needs of older adults and caregivers.

Thank you again for your leadership and bipartisan commitment to protecting and enhancing critical federal investments in Older Americans Act and other aging programs that enable older Americans to live at home and in their communities for as long as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Markwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc:

Senate Labor/HHS Chairman Roy Blunt and Ranking Member Patty Murray

House Labor/HHS Chairman Tom Cole and Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro

Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate