



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

April 21, 2009

The Honorable Herb Kohl
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Janice D. Schakowsky
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Kohl/Representative Schakowsky:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) strongly endorses the Retooling the Health Care Workforce for an Aging America Act, S. 245/H.R. 468, legislation you have introduced to expand education and training opportunities in geriatrics and long-term care for both licensed and direct care health professionals and for family caregivers. The LCAO is a coalition of 60 aging-related organizations that represents millions of older Americans.

Your bill addresses one of the most urgent problems in the health care and long-term supports and services field, the availability of trained and qualified people to care for older adults in nursing homes and in home and community-based settings. A 2007 report from the Institute for the Future of Aging Services described the graying of our current workforce, the rapid growth in the senior population and the dearth of health care providers trained in geriatrics and gerontology. The recent Institute of Medicine report, *Retooling for an Aging America*, made similar findings and recommendations to prepare the health care workforce to meet the needs of an aging population.

Your bill would carry out several of these recommendations, especially by providing geriatrics training resources for health professions faculty, and the direct care workers and family caregivers who provide the bulk of long-term services and supports. The bill's provisions for a National Resource Center on Students, Volunteers and Seniors would be enormously helpful in bringing a new generation of nurses, social workers, therapists, nutritionists, pharmacists and other professionals into the long-term care field. The Center would establish model demonstration programs for developing best practices in training of mid-level professionals to advance in the aging services field.

We greatly appreciate your leadership in introducing this vital legislation, and we look forward to working with you for its passage by Congress.

AFSCME Retirees
Alliance for Aging Research
Alzheimer's Association
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Geriatrics Society
American Public Health Association
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging

Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
Military Officers Association of America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
National Indian Council on Aging
National Senior Corps Association
NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
The Gerontological Society of America