



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

William (Larry) Minnix, Jr., Chair

March 2, 2012

Senator John Kerry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Benjamin Cardin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Barbara Mikulski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kerry, Blumenthal, Brown, Cardin, Mikulski, and Stabenow:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations – a coalition of national not-for-profit organizations representing 60 million older Americans – supports S. 1088, which helps preserve the availability of health benefits for early retirees aged 55 to 64 and their families.

Early retirees often face difficulties obtaining insurance in the individual market due to age or chronic conditions that make coverage unaffordable and inaccessible. S. 1088 fully funds the Early Retiree Reinsurance Program (ERRP), which was created under the Affordable Care Act, to provide financial assistance to health plan sponsors that made coverage available to millions of early retirees and their families. Plan sponsors that provide early retiree coverage were reimbursed 80% of the cost for claims between \$15,000 and \$90,000 from the fall of 2010 through December 31, 2011. The funds were used to help keep health costs down for this group of retirees.

Unfortunately, the \$5 billion appropriated for this program, which was to last until 2014, was insufficient to meet the needs of employers nationwide. In keeping with fiscal prudence and the law, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services was forced to stop accepting new claims as of January 1, 2012. This extremely popular program has benefitted more than 13 million people. S. 1088 will help bridge the gap until 2014, ensuring that early retirees can continue to get their much needed health benefits until the health insurance exchanges are operational.

We thank you on behalf of the retirees and older Americans we represent. We look forward to working with you towards the passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

William L. Minnix, Jr.
Chair, LCAO