



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Debra B. Whitman, Chair

July 18th, 2014

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of 69 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population and committed to representing their interests in the policy-making arena.

As your Subcommittees continue to work towards passage of a fiscal year (FY) 2015 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, LCAO urges you to prioritize investments in programs that enhance the dignity, health, and independence of older adults, such as the Older Americans Act (OAA).

The OAA is the backbone of the nation's long-term services and supports system, providing older adults with much-needed services that include home care, congregate and home-delivered meals, case management, caregiver support, transportation, health promotion and disease prevention, legal services, elder abuse prevention, and community service employment opportunities for low-income older adults. It also funds the long-term care ombudsman program, which helps resolve complaints in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and protects the rights of those vulnerable residents.

For over forty years, OAA programs have demonstrated a unique ability to provide these quality services while enhancing and protecting federal resources. OAA programs represent less than 0.2% of federal discretionary spending, but offer an incredible return on investment by leveraging state, local, and private dollars, as well as volunteerism, to help seniors age in place. Together, these services save taxpayer dollars by enabling seniors to remain independent and healthy in their own homes, where they prefer to be, and where they are less likely to need more costly hospital and institutional care paid for through Medicare and Medicaid.

Despite these successes and efficiencies, funding for the OAA has not kept pace with inflation or population growth for years, and current levels are insufficient to meet burgeoning needs. In 2009, LCAO determined that in order for OAA funding to simply catch up with the growth in the senior population and costs of services over the past decade, it would have to be increased by at least 12% a year for several years. Some populations specifically served by the Act's provisions are expanding at an even more rapid pace, such as Native American Indians/Native Alaskans, whose 65+ population is expected to grow by 115% by 2030.

Since then, OAA appropriations have continued to lag behind the costs of fuel, commodities, and wages, while the senior population has continued to grow. Additionally, cuts to discretionary

programs enacted in recent years have further threatened the sustainability of these critical programs. Due primarily to the Budget Control Act of 2011, spending on non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs – which includes the OAA – is set to fall to its lowest level on record as a share of the economy in 2017. On top of these historically low funding levels, the OAA is subject to sequestration, resulting in unnecessary and harmful cuts each year through 2021.

We appreciate the efforts led by Budget Chairs Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and Representative Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.) to temporarily mitigate sequestration's impact through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. However, we are troubled that the two-year deal allows sequestration to fully take effect again in 2017, and that it does not provide adequate funding to return all NDD programs to pre-sequester levels in the interim. Even with the Ryan-Murray agreement in place, 2015 NDD funding is set nearly 15% below the 2010 level, adjusted for inflation.

LCAO, our members, and the millions of older adults we collectively represent, are deeply concerned about eroding federal funding for OAA programs, at a time when need and demand are increasing at unprecedented levels. Currently, 41 million Americans are over the age of 65. With 10,000 Baby Boomers turning 65 each day, an estimated 80 million Americans will be 65 or older by 2040. Many of these older adults face economic security and health challenges, making them more likely to need long-term services and supports. Nearly 80% of seniors have at least one chronic condition, 3.6 million adults over the age of 65 live in poverty, the unemployment rate of low-income older workers is nearly 3 times higher than the overall jobless rate, and one in seven seniors struggles with hunger.

Extending or cutting already insufficient funding for programs that address these complex needs fails to recognize our nation's changing demographics, or the needs of seniors and their families. To begin to address these systemic inadequacies, **we respectfully ask that, at a minimum, you restore all FY 2015 Older Americans Act programs funding to pre-sequester, FY 2010 levels.**

Though not exhaustive of the interests of LCAO members, collectively or individually, please refer to the LCAO response to the President's FY 2015 budget request for more detailed information about funding proposals we support and oppose:

<http://www.lcao.org/files/2014/04/Letter-to-President-Obama-on-FY-2015-Budget.pdf>

As you will see, we support several funding proposals critical to the health and economic security of older Americans, including the request of \$20 million in mandatory funding for the further development of **Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) networks**. Absent that mandatory funding in the coming months, we urge you to continue the current investment without interruption, by allocating \$16 million for these “no wrong door” networks in FY 2015. In addition to supporting the OAA, we request that you provide the first appropriations for the Elder Justice Act since its enactment in 2010, by funding the \$25 million **Elder Justice Initiative** proposed by the Administration.

In contrast, we urge you to reject the budget request proposals to significantly restructure and reduce investments in **Senior Corps**, as well as cut the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**, both of which will undermine the engagement and employment opportunities of low-income older adults and eliminate millions of volunteer hours that local organizations rely on to serve the most vulnerable children and seniors in their communities.

Further, we request that the allocation from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPH Fund) for **Chronic Disease Self-Management Education** be increased to \$16 million, in order to restore resources to the level utilized in FY 2010 and FY 2011. We appreciate the new allocation of \$5 million from the PPH Fund for **Elder Falls Prevention**, and urge continued support for the proposal included in the past three Senate Labor-HHS bills that provided a total allocation of \$10 million to fund activities at both the Administration for Community Living and the Centers for Disease Control. Along with the allocation for Alzheimer's, these are the only PPH Fund resources which primarily benefit seniors, and there is strong evidence that these prevention investments improve health outcomes and reduce medical costs and Medicare spending.

While we recognize the difficult fiscal constraints under which you are operating, we respectfully ask you to recognize the importance of programs that improve the health and well-being of seniors and their families. Without your investment in these initiatives, the valuable services that shelter older Americans against hunger, isolation, poor health, neglect, abuse, unemployment, and other challenges will fail to reach the aging population.

Under your leadership, LCAO hopes that in FY 2015, all OAA programs will be funded at a level that protects and strengthens them, so they may meet an ever-growing demand for services.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you to ensure a sustained investment in the OAA.

Sincerely,

AARP

AFSCME Retirees

Association for Gerontology and Human Development In Historically Black Colleges and Universities (AGHDHBCU)

Alliance for Aging Research

Alliance for Retired Americans

Alzheimer's Foundation of America

American Postal Workers Union Retirees (APWU)

American Society on Aging (ASA)

B'nai B'rith International

Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.

Compassion & Choices

Easter Seals

Experience Works

Gray Panthers

International Association for Indigenous Aging (IA2)

International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)

Leading Age

Lutheran Services in America (LSA)

Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)

Medicare Rights Center

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD)

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA)

National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)

National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC)

National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)

National Association for Hispanic Elderly (ANPPM)

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors (NARSVPD)

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)

National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc. (NCBA)

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)

National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

National Council on Aging (NCOA)

National Indian Council on Aging

National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)

National Senior Citizens Law Center (NSCLC)

National Senior Corps Association

OWL – The Voice of Women 40+

Pension Rights Center

PHI – Quality Care through Quality Jobs

Senior Service America, Inc.

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC).

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA)

The Jewish Federations of North America

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)

Women's Institute for A Secure Retirement (WISER)