



Debra B. Whitman, Chair

March 3, 2015

United States Senate
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray and Senators Burr and Sanders:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of 70+ national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's seniors and committed to representing their interests in the policy-making arena.

The undersigned members of LCAO thank you for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions' recent unanimous approval of bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA), the **Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 (S. 192)**.

Since the Act's most recent expiration in 2011, LCAO has supported a reauthorization that reaffirms its mission and protects its services. This remains a top priority and we appreciate your bipartisan efforts to advance the OAA reauthorization process in the 114th Congress.

As you know, the OAA is a primary vehicle for developing, coordinating, and delivering home and community-based services that help older adults maintain their independence and dignity. The OAA also includes the only federal workforce program targeted to help low-income older adults prepare for and obtain employment in the community, and a long-term care ombudsman program that protects the rights of seniors living in institutions.

The OAA is cost-effective. By keeping seniors healthy and in their communities, OAA programs can delay or prevent the need for more expensive institutional care, such as that paid for through Medicare or Medicaid, effectively saving taxpayer, state and federal dollars. In addition to helping seniors age in place, OAA programs improve our country's fiscal future and promote efficiencies within the health care system by preventing unnecessary hospital stays, reducing readmission rates, coordinating care and managing care transitions.

S. 192 effectively builds upon the excellent work done by lawmakers and advocates in the 113th Congress. We recognize the important role of these negotiations in both the development and advancement of OAA reauthorization legislation so early in the current session.

With respect to the bill itself, we appreciate the updated definitions of terminology, modest changes to several key OAA programs, and other considered adjustments designed to reflect today's realities. We also appreciate the work done by the Committee to reach consensus and craft a workable agreement on the funding formula.

Most importantly, the legislation preserves the numerous ways in which this Act works so well at the federal, state and local levels, on behalf of the older adults and caregivers for whom it is a lifeline to dignity, independence, health, safety and economic security.

Finally, we greatly appreciate the Committee's swift action at the very start of the 114th Congress. We stand ready to help advance this critical bill swiftly through the Senate and the House.

Sincerely,

AARP

AFSCME Retirees

Alliance for Aging Research

Alliance for Retired Americans

Altarum Institute – Center for Elder Care and Advanced Illness

Alzheimer's Association

Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA)

AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine

American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)

American Geriatric Society (AGS)

American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Retirees

American Society on Aging (ASA)

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

B'nai B'rith International

Caring Across Generations

Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.

Compassion and Choices

Easter Seals

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA)

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)

Justice in Aging (formerly the National Senior Citizens Law Center)

LeadingAge

Lutheran Services in America (LSA)

Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA)

National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)
National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)
National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC)
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD)
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council on Aging (NCOA)
National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)
National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF)
National Senior Corps Association (NSCA)
OWL – The Voice of Women 40+
Pension Rights Center
PHI - Quality Care *through* Quality Jobs
Senior Service America Inc.
Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)

cc:ed to Senate HELP members