



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Max Richtman, Chair

July 14, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Reid:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of more than 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 commend you for your strong leadership on aging issues.

One of our longstanding legislative priorities is the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 (S.192). We urge you to pass this broadly supported bill before the Senate begins its summer recess. In January, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization bill received unanimous support from the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions when it was approved as the committee's first legislation to advance in the 114th Congress and has remained on the Senate Calendar since February.

Signed into law 50 years ago today, the Older Americans Act (OAA) is essential to developing, coordinating, and delivering home and community-based services that help older adults age with independence and dignity in their homes and communities. Many individuals served by OAA-funded programs are at significant risk of hunger, isolation, and losing their ability to live with health and independence. OAA-supported programs such as Meals on Wheels, transportation services, caregiver assistance, and elder abuse protection are just some of the vital functions the OAA delivers to more than 11 million seniors and their caregivers annually. The OAA also includes the Senior Community Service Employment Program, 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 advocates for seniors living in long-term care facilities.

By keeping seniors healthy and in their communities, OAA programs delay, decrease and can 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 and nursing home stays, reducing readmission rates, improving care coordination and managing care transitions. The OAA works well at the federal, state, and local level for older adults and their caregivers for whom the Act is a lifeline to dignity, independence, health, safety and economic security.

S.192 includes modest changes to several key OAA programs, updates some important definitions, and makes other thoughtful adjustments designed to reflect today's realities. The HELP Committee was able to craft and include a workable agreement on the legislation's funding formula—a process which stymied progress during the previous Congress, but which we are pleased to see resolved early in the 114th Congress.

Failure to act promptly and pass this important reauthorization through the Senate could threaten the sustainability of the OAA programs as well as the health, dignity, and independence of the older Americans who depend on these programs. We urge you to reaffirm your commitment to current and future seniors by reauthorizing the OAA in July, a fitting time frame to mark a half century of accomplishments for this critical program that serves older adults in virtually every community across the nation.

LCAO has played a significant leadership role in past reauthorizations, and we stand ready to work with you to build upon the success of the OAA in the current reauthorization process and beyond.

Sincerely,

AARP
AFSCME Retirees
Aging Life Care Association
Alliance for Aging Research
AMDA: The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
American Foundation for the Blind
American Geriatrics Society
American Postal Workers Union Retirees
American Society on Aging
B'nai B'rith International
Caring Across Generations
Center for Elder Care and Advanced Illness, Altarum Institute
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Compassion and Choices
Easter Seals
The Gerontological Society of America
International Association for Indigenous Aging
The Jewish Federations of North America
Justice in Aging
LeadingAge

Lutheran Services in America
Meals on Wheels America
Medicare Rights Center
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Adult Day Services Association
National Adult Protective Services Association
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association for Hispanic Elderly
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc.
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging, Inc.
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council on Aging
National Senior Corps Association
OWL - The Voice for Women 40+
Pension Rights Center
PHI (Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute)
Senior Service America, Inc.
Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders, Inc.
Social Security Works
Volunteers of America
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women's Institute for A Secure Retirement

cc: Members of the United States Senate