



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Richard J. Fiesta, Chair

November 15, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Rob Portman
Member
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Member
Senate Finance Committee

Dear Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, Senator Portman, and Senator Cantwell:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), a coalition of national nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving the lives and well-being of America's older adult population, strongly support the bipartisan EMPOWER Care Act ("Ensuring Medicaid Provides Opportunities for Widespread Equity, Resources, and Care Act") (S. 2227/H.R. 5306), which would extend and improve the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Rebalancing demonstration program. We applaud Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA), as well as Representatives Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI), for sponsoring reauthorization of this vital program that has helped thousands of older adults across the country move back home, and we urge the measure's swift passage.

First authorized in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 with strong bipartisan support and signed into law by President George W. Bush, MFP has helped more than 88,000 older adults (CMS, 2018) and people with disabilities – nearly one-third of them older adults -- transition out of nursing and other facilities back to living in their communities. It also has helped 43 states and the District of Columbia develop the needed infrastructure to enhance people's access to home and community-based services (HCBS), while helping states shift more of their resources to HCBS and reduce expenditures on institutional services.

MFP is a shining example of a program that allows older adults to live with dignity in their communities while simultaneously improving care and achieving cost savings. In its 2017 report to Congress based on independent evaluation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted that MFP participants who made this transition reported significant and lasting improvements in quality of care, quality of life, and community integration after returning to

their communities while also achieving lower readmission rates. Independent evaluation also found significant reductions of approximately 23% in overall Medicaid and Medicare expenditures after individuals return to the community.

Despite these encouraging findings, MFP's authorization expired on September 30, 2016. According to CMS, 12 states have already exhausted their allotted MFP funding and the remaining state MFP programs will do so as well by December 31st of this year. As a result, states are transitioning fewer individuals and the progress we have made due to MFP in serving older adults in their communities is at risk.

States and thousands of older adults and people with disabilities still need MFP. Significant variations remain across states and the different populations receiving HCBS. Many older adults – over 50,000 according to recent analyses of the Nursing Home Minimum Data Set – have reported that they want to talk with someone about leaving their facility, but have not received a referral to a local agency that could help them.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of this legislation, and we look forward to working with you to reauthorize this vital program before the end of the year.

Sincerely,

AARP

Aging Life Care Association®

Alliance for Retired Americans

Altarum

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

American Geriatrics Society

B'nai B'rith International

Caring Across Generations

Center for Medicare Advocacy

Community Catalyst

Easterseals

Families USA

International Association for Indigenous Aging

The Jewish Federations of North America

Justice in Aging

Leading Age

Lutheran Services in America

Meals on Wheels America

Medicare Rights Center

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)

National Adult Protective Services Association

National Association for Home Care and Hospice

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council on Aging
National Senior Corps Association
PHI
Service Employees International Union
The Gerontological Society of America
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)