



# Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

*Debra B. Whitman, Chair*

August 5, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman  
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chairman  
The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Shelby, Leahy, Blunt, Collins, Murray and Reed:

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. Many of the federal programs under your funding jurisdiction are critical to helping millions of older adults and caregivers age with dignity, health and independence in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

**We appreciate that the House and Senate achieved another two-year, bipartisan budget agreement that alleviates draconian budget caps included in the Budget Control Act (BCA) and maintains parity between defense and non-defense discretionary programs.** We now hope you will turn to providing funding for all federal discretionary programs that serve older adults and caregivers. You can read more about LCAO's specific discretionary funding priorities in the [Coalition's April 29, 2019 letter to House and Senate Appropriators](#).

We are also writing to make you aware of the funding levels proposed for several Older Americans Act (OAA) and other critical aging programs included in the recent FY 2020 funding proposal for the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Labor (DOL) that were passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. LCAO Members strongly support the funding levels for HHS and DOL that the House approved on June 19 as part of the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations Bill, H.R. 2740.

We ask that as you move toward developing a full-year FY 2020 funding proposal for HHS and DOL programs, you consider our feedback on these measures and incorporate the Coalition's specific funding requests for **Older Americans Act (OAA) and other critical federal programs that support older adults and caregivers.**

### **FY 2020 Requests for Older Americans Act Programs (Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Community Living-Administration on Aging and Department of Labor)**

As you know, the OAA is the backbone of our nation's home and community 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, community service employment opportunities for low-income older adults, and ombudsman programs that help protect residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

For more than fifty years, OAA programs have demonstrated a unique ability to provide these quality services while enhancing and protecting federal resources. Together, these services are an efficient use of taxpayer dollars by enabling 11 million seniors and their caregivers 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.

For years, OAA funding has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population eligible for services. This financial reality has made it increasingly difficult for the Aging Network to even maintain existing services, let alone meet escalating need and keep up with a growing population. In fact, stagnant or declining federal funding since 2010 has eroded the current capacity of the network to address the needs of older adults. It would require a 23 percent funding increase for OAA programs to simply restore the service capacity that has been lost since FY 2010.

LCAO appreciates that the House of Representatives made significant progress in restoring the capacity of the Aging Network in their FY 2020 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill (H.R. 2740). We hope that Senate Appropriators will consider these funding levels for OAA and other critical aging programs as a baseline in your FY 2020 federal funding proposals.

#### **Administration for Community Living (ACL), HHS**

We appreciate that many OAA programs serving older Americans received increases in the House bill. Overall, the House bill allocates \$2.294 billion to aging and disability programs within ACL, which is \$174 million more than FY 2019 and a significant \$298 million more than the President's FY 2020 budget request. The bill House bill also disregards the Administration's proposals to eliminate OAA Title V senior workforce programs and make steep cuts to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).

Additionally, we encourage the Senate to include report language echoing the report language in H.R. 2740 that raises concerns about the Administration's reorganization of ACL, indicating that Congress should have been notified of the changes sooner and that it recommends consulting stakeholders on implementation and that any reorganization must be consistent with current law.

### **Older Americans Act Title III Programs**

We encourage Senate Appropriators to include the following funding levels for core Older Americans Act, which reflect the increases to Title III included in H.R. 2740:

- III B Home and Community-Based Supportive Services was boosted by \$37 million (~10 percent) to \$422 million;
- III C1 Congregate Meals was increased by \$29.6 million (6 percent) to \$525 million;
- III C2 Home-Delivered Meals was increased by \$53.6 million (21 percent) to \$305 million; and
- III E National Family Caregiver Support Program was boosted by \$19 million (10 percent) to \$200 million.

### **Additional OAA and Aging Programs**

#### **Native American Nutrition, Supportive Services and Caregiver Support**

Another top LCAO priority reflected in this bill are funding increases for Title VI Native American aging programs, which received an increase totaling \$5 million in H.R. 2740. House lawmakers approved Title VI nutrition and supportive services programs at \$37.2 million and caregiver services at \$12.1 million. If adopted in a final funding bill these increases would represent a nearly 11 percent growth in total Title VI funding over last year.

#### **Elder Justice and Adult Protective Services**

For the first time in many years, the House FY 2020 Labor-HHS funding bill adds \$2 million (9 percent) to fund OAA Title VII Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect programs at \$23.7 million. Lawmakers also increased Elder Rights Support Activities, including the Elder Justice Initiative, by \$5 million (33 percent) to \$20.8 million total, which specifically augments the National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System (NAMRS) by \$3 million and screening activities for elder abuse, neglect and exploitation by \$2 million.

#### **State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)**

After years of stagnation, cuts and even elimination, the House passed a \$5.9 million increase for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), funding it at \$55 million, which fully restores the program from a concerning FY 2016 cut. The SHIP program has been repeatedly targeted for cuts or elimination in both congressional and Administrative budget proposals for the last several years. This funding level rejects the Administration's argument that SHIPs duplicate other federal resources such as 1-800-MEDICARE. We encourage the Senate to also, at a minimum, adopt this increase for vital SHIP programs.

#### **SCSEP, Senior Corps**

The House FY 2020 bill also rejected the President's repeat proposal to eliminate the OAA Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), administered by the Department of Labor (DOL), and the Senior Corps programs (RSVP, Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion) which are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Under the House bill, both programs would receive significant boosts, and we hope the Senate will follow suit. H.R. 2740 funds SCSEP at \$463.8 million, which is the level authorized for FY 2019 in the current OAA reauthorization. Also, after years of stagnation, the House passed funding for Senior Corps programs at \$221.5 million.

## **Lifespan Respite**

We appreciate that the House approved a floor amendment to increase funding for the National Lifespan respite program to \$10 million. The Lifespan Respite Care Program supports short-term care that offers individuals or family members temporary relief from the daily routine and stress of providing care, which is a critical component to bolstering family stability and maintaining family caregiver health and well-being. We hope Senate Appropriators will adopt the funding passed in H.R. 2740 in their FY 2020 Labor-HHS bill.

## **Other Important Aging Programs Administered through Health and Human Services**

### **The Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP)**

As the only federal program specifically designed to enhance the skills and training of health care teams serving older adults to improve care, quality, safety, and reduce the cost of care, GWEP provides appropriate training for the entire care team. Administered through the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) under HHS, GWEP targets training to family caregivers, direct care workers, and health care professionals such as physicians, nurses, social workers, pharmacists, and psychologists. With our nation's burgeoning population of older adults, we need a stronger and sustained federal commitment to our eldercare workforce. In our FY 2019 appropriations request letter, LCAO supported at least \$51 million for GWEP funding. The House provided \$43.384 million, which is \$2.647 more than in FY 2019.

However, during the recent HRSA Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), a number of high-scoring GWEP proposals were not funded because of lack of resources, meaning that nearly 20 current GWEP sites are at risk of shutting down. The GWEP program could substantially benefit every state, as the programs addresses local needs, but current funding levels limit the program to 35 states and 2 territories. Therefore, we request that you consider providing additional funds to this valuable program so that HRSA is able to keep the unfunded current GWEP sites open and improve the geographic distribution of the GWEP program.

### **Vital Block Grant Programs Supporting Aging Services**

Other critical state and community block grant programs, which supplement and support the work of the Aging Network, received either increases or level funding in the FY 2020 House Labor-HHS bill, despite the Administration's request to abolish these programs. We hope the Senate will, at a minimum adopt House-passed funding levels for:

- Community Services Block Grant at \$760 million
- Social Services Block Grant at \$1.7 billion
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP at \$3.84 billion)

### **FY2020 Funding for Affordable Senior Housing and Service Coordinators (Department of Housing and Urban Development)**

The need for affordable housing among older adults is significant. Only one of every three older adults eligible for rental assistance receives it because the programs are too small to meet the need. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) documented that older adult households comprise a majority, 66 percent, of the most recent 582,000 increase in the number of households classified as "worst-case housing needs." Furthermore, the share of older adults experiencing homelessness nearly doubled from 4.1 percent in 2007 to 8 percent in 2017, which far exceeds the growth trends among the population of older adults. reflects a sharper rise than in the overall number of all U.S.

individuals 62 or older. LCAO supports robust funding for HUD and greater collaboration between HUD, HHS, and other federal agencies to facilitate successful program linkages for seniors. We urge the Senate to fund HUD at or above the levels appropriated under H.R. 3351, which passed the House of Representatives on June 26.

***Section 202 Supportive Housing Program FY2020 Funding***

Nearly 400,000 older adult households rely on HUD’s Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program. LCAO supports funding the Section 202 program at or above the House-passed \$804 million. This funding supports capital advance funding for new affordable housing units for older adults with low incomes and it should include at least \$95 million in Section 202 Service Coordination Grant funding for renewals of all existing service coordinator grants and nominal funding for additional service coordinator grants. Overall, we encourage the Senate to include \$600 million in funding for new homes under Section 202. We also hope the Senate will increase the Service Coordinator grants to \$120 million in FY2020 to provide staff for 500 additional senior communities and approve at least \$10 million in funding for the new HUD home modification to assist aging homeowners to stay in their own homes and communities.

***Project-Based Rental Assistance***

The Section 202 housing developments program relies on the Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) program for rental subsidies. LCAO urges the Senate to include the House-approved allocation of \$12.6 billion to allow for full funding of all PBRA annual contract renewals.

***Service Coordinators in Public Housing***

Service coordinators are a valuable resource and essential part of assisting seniors living in Public Housing throughout the country. Service coordinators assist elderly and/or disabled residents by identifying, locating, and acquiring the services necessary for them to live independently. LCAO urges The Senate to provide at least \$35 million for the Public Housing Resident Opportunity for Self Sufficiency (ROSS) Service Coordinator Program in FY 2020.

**Conclusion**

While we recognize the difficult fiscal constraints under which you are operating, we respectfully ask you to recognize the importance of programs that successfully and effectively improves the health and well-being of seniors and their families. We appreciate your leadership to pass a budget agreement that eliminates the threat of significant cuts in FY 2020, and now urge investment in vital discretionary initiatives that provide services to protect older Americans against hunger, isolation, poor health, neglect, abuse, unemployment and other challenges.

Under your leadership, LCAO hopes that in FY 2020, all Older Americans Act and other important aging programs will be funded at levels that enable them to meet a rapidly growing demand for services. Thank you for your consideration of these specific requests, and we look forward to working with you to ensure sustained investment in the OAA and other key aging programs.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO  
Aging Life Care Association  
Alliance for Aging Research  
Alliance for Retired Americans  
Alzheimer's Foundation of America  
AMDA - The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine  
American Association of Service Coordinators

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists  
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities  
American Society on Aging  
B'nai B'rith International  
The Gerontological Society of America  
International Association for Indigenous Aging IA2  
Jewish Federation of North America (The)  
Justice in Aging  
LeadingAge  
Meals on Wheels America  
Medicare Rights Center  
National Adult Day Services Association  
National Adult Protective Services Association  
National Alliance for Caregiving  
National Association for Home Care and Hospice  
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 Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.  
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care  
National Indian Council on Aging  
PHI-Quality Care Through Quality Jobs  
Social Security Works  
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement

cc: Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee  
Members of the Senate Special Committee on Aging