



# Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

*Debra B. Whitman, Chair*

September 18, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and Labor  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and Labor  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx,

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

We write to you today to thank the House Committee on Education and Labor for its efforts to develop and negotiate bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA). We commend Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Susie Lee (D-NV), James Comer (R-KY), Susan Wild (D-PA), and Dusty Johnson (R-SD) for their leadership and introducing the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019 (H.R. 4334). We urge you to favorably report this bill out of Committee.

As you know, the current authorization of the Act expires on September 30, 2019 and prompt action is needed to ensure the sustainability of OAA programs, as well as the health, dignity, and independence of the older Americans and their caregivers who depend on these programs. A bipartisan reauthorization of the OAA that reaffirms and protects its mission remains a top priority for LCAO.

The 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 that deliver to more than 11 million seniors and their caregivers annually include home-delivered and congregate nutrition services, in-home supportive services, transportation, caregiver support, disease prevention and health promotion, community service employment, the long-term care ombudsman program, services to prevent the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults, and other supportive services.

By keeping seniors healthy and in their communities for over 50 years, OAA programs have delayed or prevented 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 have improved our country's fiscal future and promoted efficiencies within the health care system by preventing unnecessary hospital stays, reducing readmission rates, coordinating care, and managing care transitions.

We are pleased to note that the Dignity in Aging Act incorporates the majority of [reauthorization priorities articulated by LCAO](#), and many of the additional recommendations of our colleagues. Most importantly, the bill calls for much-needed and necessary investments in the OAA by increasing authorizations over the next five years – the top priority of our coalition and the most critical need of the Aging Services Network.

Other LCAO priority areas addressed by H.R. 4334 include research and development, Native American services, local planning and development, supports for those suffering from dementias and social isolation, legal services, and family caregiver supports.

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.

LCAO has played a significant leadership role in past reauthorizations, and we stand ready to help advance this critical bill swiftly through the House and Senate and work with you to build upon the success of the OAA in the current reauthorization process and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra B. Whitman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debra B. Whitman, PhD  
Chair, LCAO

cc: Members of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor