



Leadership Council
of Aging Organizations
Debra B. Whitman, Chair

February 5, 2020

The Hon. Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
The Hon. Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
The Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Lamar Alexander, Chairman
The Hon. Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Bobby Scott, Chairman
The Hon. Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, 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 endorse the *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020* and urge its swift passage in both Chambers. We thank you for your leadership and hard work to develop this bipartisan, bicameral five-year reauthorization of the federal Older Americans Act (OAA).

The most recent authorization of the Act expired 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 rely on these programs. Achieving a bipartisan reauthorization of the OAA that reaffirms and protects its mission is a top priority for LCAO.

The OAA is essential to developing, coordinating, and delivering home and community-based services that help older adults age independently 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 include, but are not limited to, 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. These vital community-based services support more than 11 million seniors and their caregivers annually.

By keeping seniors healthy and in their communities for nearly 55 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 promoted efficiencies within the health care system by preventing unnecessary hospital stays, reducing readmission rates, coordinating care, and managing care transitions.

We appreciate that the *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020* incorporates many of the reauthorization priorities articulated by LCAO, and reflects significant stakeholder engagement and feedback. Most importantly, the bill calls for 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. This 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.

Again, LCAO commends the commitment to drafting a bicameral, bipartisan reauthorization that upholds the vital, long-standing mission of the OAA. We are pleased to support the *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020*, and we urge its swift passage in the Senate and House.

Sincerely,



Debra B. Whitman, PhD
Chair, LCAO

cc: Members of the United States Senate
Members of the United States House of Representatives