



Leadership Council
of Aging Organizations

Katie Smith Sloan, Chair

February 16, 2022

Dear Member of Congress,

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. We strongly urge you to enact omnibus appropriations legislation that includes all 12 subcommittee bills for Fiscal Year 2022 and becomes effective when the continuing resolution (CR) ends. In doing so, Congress should fully fund the Administration's request of \$14.189 billion for Social Security Administration so it can fulfill its critical mission to administer the nation's social insurance programs for the financial well-being of retirees and their survivors, disabled workers and their families, as well as the aged and blind. This is especially important because of the harm done by Covid-19.

LCAO is thankful for the increases requested (above FY 2021 levels) of 9% in the House-passed Appropriations bill and 8% in the Senate's request. But as important as those increases would be, the proposed funding is insufficient to meet the rising needs of the agency and bridge the gap caused by more than ten years of underfunding. Between 2010 and 2021, SSA experienced cuts of approximately 13% percent of its administrative budget which resulted in field office closings, layoffs, and workload backlogs. At the same time, the number of Social Security beneficiaries grew by 21 percent.

In 2020, the 1,200 local field offices closed because of dangers posed by Covid-19, presenting a significant obstacle to doing business in person. Just a month later, applications from retirement-age adults, disabled adults, and parents of disabled children plummeted by 55 percent, 32 percent, and 51 percent relative to prior year numbers. And, in FY 2020, 49% of calls to Social Security went unanswered, further hampering beneficiaries from conducting business. In FY 2021, SSA's awards of SSDI benefits to disabled persons and their family members were down 25 percent relative to FY 2019. SSI disability benefit awards (for blind and disabled individuals to provide them with basic income) were even lower, with a 30 percent decline. As it reopens its field offices in April, SSA will need a financial investment to fully carry out its mission, as well as additional funds to close the ten-year funding shortfall, reopen safely, eliminate work backlogs, and address the long-term challenges posed by the pandemic.

LCAO strongly urges Congress to fund programs and services that support older adults at their true cost, taking into account growing demographic and human need, recent funding stagnation and the harm done by the pandemic. Continuing resolutions fail to address these needs and



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prevent recovery when our country needs it the most. We strongly urge you to enact omnibus appropriations legislation including all 12 appropriations bills, and in doing so, fully fund the Social Security Administration.

Sincerely,

AARP
ADvancing States
AFL-CIO
AFSCME
Aging Life Care Association
Alliance for Retired Americans
AMDA - The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
American Geriatrics Society
American Society on Aging
APWU Retirees Department
Community Catalyst
Justice in Aging
LeadingAge
Lutheran Services in America
Medicare Rights Center
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association
National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)
National Adult Protective Services Association
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association. for Hispanic Elderly
National Council on Aging
National Senior Corps Association
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)
Pension Rights Center
Social Security Works
The Consumer Voice
The Gerontological Society of America
USAging
Women's Institute for Secure Retirement (WISER)