



Leadership Council
of *Aging Organizations*

February 1, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Re: Appointments, Assistant Secretary for Aging and Social Security Administration
Commissioner

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) I am writing to urge you to fill the current leadership vacancies within the Social Security Administration (SSA) and Administration for Community Living (ACL) with permanent staff. We are a coalition of 66 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population and is committed to representing their interests in policy making arenas. LCAO serves as a source of reliable information about issues affecting older adults and provides leadership and vision as America meets the challenges and opportunities presented by our aging society. Based on our collective experience advocating for and serving older adults, we urge you to fill two, currently vacant positions: 1) the SSA Commissioner, and 2) the Assistant Secretary for Aging.

LCAO members have seen firsthand the hard work and effective leadership of the current Acting Assistant Secretary for Aging and the Acting SSA Commissioner. Senate-confirmed leaders, however, would nevertheless provide greater stability and clearer authority during the remainder of this Administration. Treading carefully to not create problems with an eventual Senate-confirmed agency head, acting agency leaders may be hesitant to take the critical actions that are necessary at this time to address, for example, the dire disability determination backlog at SSA and the crises concerning the diminishing direct care workforce and burdened caregivers struggling to serve community-dwelling older adults. By moving to fill these two positions, the opportunities to take bold action to address these critical problems would be strengthened.

ACL and SSA oversee broad swaths of older adult policy and it's vitally important, especially given continuing COVID-19 concerns, to have these positions filled to continue to ensure older adults are receiving the services and supports they need. The two acting occupants of the roles have shown effective leadership.

Nominating and confirming a permanent Commissioner would provide accountable leadership and reassure the millions of Americans of all ages who rely on SSA programs of the Administration's clear commitment and support. Given SSA's labor management problems that worsened under the prior Administration, these assurances are particularly important. If the Senate were to confirm the SSA Commissioner, the former would have a five-year appointment to strengthen SSA and its vital programs.



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Nominating and confirming an Assistant Secretary for Aging is not only critical to supporting older adults but is also important to the broader aging and disability work of the Administration for Community Living, which the Assistant Secretary leads under the title of Administrator. ACL supports the work of both the aging and disability networks, the former of which administers the Older Americans Act at the state and local levels under ACL's leadership. The impact of COVID-19 on the older adult population who relies upon these aging services and supports has only made this nomination more important than ever. A Senate-confirmed Assistant Secretary for Aging is needed to address a host of pressing issues facing the aging network, including major workforce issues and the coming COVID-funding service cliffs that will negatively affect older adults.

Continued supports for aging services benefit us all as we age. The two agencies need the full complement of legislatively mandated professionals in place to ensure that older adults can continue to thrive and receive the services and supports needed to age well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ramsey Alwin", written over a horizontal line.

Ramsey Alwin
Chair, LCAO
President & CEO, NCOA