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April 25, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman and Chairwoman Leahy and DeLauro, and Ranking Members Shelby and Granger:

On behalf of ADvancing States, I am writing you in support of funding for important programs that serve older adults and people with disabilities in the FY2023 appropriations package. ADvancing States is a nonpartisan association of state government agencies that represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities. We work to support visionary state leadership, the advancement of state systems innovation, and the development of national policies that support home and community-based services for older adults and persons with disabilities. Our members administer a wide range of services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities, including overseeing Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and services in every state. Together with our members, we work to design, improve, and sustain state systems delivering long-term services and supports for people who are older or have a disability and for their caregivers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has strongly illustrated the essential role that OAA programs play in supporting our nations seniors in times of crisis. The Aging Network across all levels – state agencies, area agencies on aging (AAAs), and local providers – has stepped up in myriad ways to meet the massive need and new demand for services. The supplemental funding provided to states via the mechanism of the OAA have been instrumental in ensuring older Americans are safe, fed, and receiving accurate information during this crisis.

The Omnibus Appropriations bill for FY2022 provided modest increases to aging and disability programs that state agencies welcomed and are grateful for. However, many of the increases are significantly lower than prior funding proposals released by Congress and the Administration. As states and their partners continue to assess and proceed with “reopening” and what that looks like in their communities, it is essential that funding levels continue to account for the substantial number of new older Americans being served by OAA programs and also reflect the fact that some older adults – due to isolation, deferred medical care, and many other causes – may have greater health challenges and decreased functionality than ever before.

It is for these reasons that we request that you continue support the OAA and related aging and disability services at amounts no less than the funding provided in the FY2022 appropriations bill. Additionally, we wish to highlight three important areas that would benefit from increased investments through the appropriations process. These include HCBS Supportive Services authorized by Title III-B of the OAA; Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services, Title III-D; and research and evaluation under the OAA. We are specifically writing to request:

- No less than \$500 million for Title III-B of the OAA;
- Additional funding for Title III-D of the OAA; and
- At least \$50 million for the ACL OAA research and evaluation center.

OAA Title III-B, Supportive Services, supports flexible delivery of home and community-based services such as home care, personal care, adult day, and home modifications among many other services aimed at helping older people remain independent in their own homes and communities, which is where 88 percent of older Americans want to age.¹ This Title is unique in the OAA in that unlike other OAA programs that target a specific service, it supports a wide range of services. To enhance this flexible delivery method of supports and services for older adults, we request Congress provide no less than \$500 million for OAA Title III-B, which is in line with prior congressional and Administration proposals.

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services in the OAA are a critical component of the aging network’s ability to enhance and sustain the health and well-being of older adults. These programs include important interventions such as falls prevention, chronic disease self-management, substance-abuse screening and referrals, hypertension management, and many others. The 2020 Reauthorization of the OAA included new additions to allowable health screening activities, including immunization status and screening for malnutrition. The Act also now authorizes evidence-based health promotion programs for infectious disease and vaccine-preventable disease, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and chronic pain management. Additionally, the 2020 Reauthorization expanded III-D to include services that screen for suicide risk, social isolation, and traumatic brain injuries, as well as coordinating treatment and rehabilitation related services for issues identified by those screens.

¹ <https://www.healthyagingpoll.org/reports-more/report/older-adults-preparedness-age-place>



While all of these are welcome additions that address pressing issues for older adults, these changes were included in the reauthorization but III-D was not provided additional funding for implementation. Despite the wide range of services and supports included in the statute, III-D remains one of the smallest parts of the Act at approximately \$25 million in the FY2022 appropriations package. Given the ongoing pandemic and the devastating toll that social isolation takes on seniors, we think it is imperative that additional funding be dedicated so that states and area agencies on aging can fully implement the intent of the recent reauthorization. We strongly believe that the addition of additional focus areas should be accompanied by increased appropriations for FY2023 and beyond.

The 2020 OAA reauthorization also increased the research and evaluation capacity and responsibilities at the Administration on Community Living (ACL). Our members were very supportive of this proposal since we believe that the true value and outcomes of OAA services are often challenging to demonstrate with the current research available. However, the proposal did not provide a dedicated source of funds for the new research center at ACL. We believe that this research should be accompanied by sufficient funding to achieve its purpose and request no less than \$50 million to establish this center in ACL.

We appreciate the significant investments that you have made throughout the pandemic, especially the supplemental funding to assist the network to respond and enhance services. We request that you continue to support these important programs for older adults and people with disabilities, with an emphasis on increased funding for supportive services, disease prevention and health promotion services, and research and evaluation. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact Adam Mosey at amosey@advancingstates.org or 202-898-2578.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martha Roherty".

Martha Roherty
Executive Director
ADvancing States

Cc: Members of the U.S. Senate
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives