



*Debra B. Whitman, Chair*

November 12, 2014

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of 71 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population and committed to representing their interests in the policy-making arena.

As your Subcommittees work to ensure continued appropriations for the remainder of fiscal year (FY) 2015, we would encourage you to work toward the passage of an omnibus appropriations bill that includes Labor-HHS-Education funding levels that prioritize programs to enhance the dignity, health and independence of older adults, such as the Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and services.

## **The Value of the Older Americans Act**

The OAA is the backbone of the nation's long-term services and supports system, providing older adults with much-needed services that include home care, congregate and home-delivered meals, case management, caregiver support, transportation, health promotion and disease prevention, legal services, elder abuse prevention, and community service employment opportunities for low-income older adults. It also funds the long-term care ombudsman program, which helps resolve complaints in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and protects the rights of those vulnerable residents.

For over forty years, OAA programs have demonstrated a unique ability to provide these quality services while enhancing and protecting federal resources. OAA programs represent less than 0.2% of federal discretionary spending, but offer an incredible return on investment by leveraging state, local, and private dollars, as well as volunteerism, to help seniors age in place. **Together, these services save taxpayer dollars by enabling seniors to remain independent and healthy in their own homes, where they prefer to be, and where they are less likely to need more costly hospital and institutional care paid for through Medicare and Medicaid.**

*Despite these successes and efficiencies, funding for the OAA has not kept pace with inflation or population growth for years, and current levels are insufficient to meet burgeoning needs.*

## **Growing Population & Need, Yet Declining Resources**

In 2009, LCAO determined that in order for OAA funding to simply catch up with the growth in the senior population and costs of services over the past decade, it would have to be increased by at least 12% a year for several years.

Since then, OAA appropriations have continued to lag behind the costs of fuel, commodities and wages, while the senior population has continued to grow. Additionally, cuts to discretionary programs enacted in recent years have further threatened the sustainability of these critical programs. Due primarily to the Budget Control Act of 2011, spending on non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs—which includes the OAA—is set to fall to its lowest level on record as a share of the economy in 2017.

While we appreciate the efforts led by Budget Chairs Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) to temporarily mitigate sequestration's impact through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, we are troubled that the two-year deal allows sequestration to fully take effect again in 2016, and that it does not provide adequate funding to return all NDD programs to pre-sequester levels in the interim. Even with the Ryan-Murray agreement in place, FY 2015 NDD funding is set nearly 15% below the FY 2010 level, adjusted for inflation.

LCAO, our state and local partners, and the millions of older adults we collectively represent are deeply concerned about eroding federal funding for OAA and other vital NDD programs at a time when need and demand are increasing at unprecedented levels. Currently, 41 million Americans are over the age of 65. With 10,000 Baby Boomers turning 65 each day, an estimated 80 million Americans will be 65 or older by 2040. Some populations specifically served by the Act's programs are expanding at an even faster pace, such as Native American Indians/Native Alaskans, whose 65+ population is expected to grow by 115% by 2030.

Many of these older adults face economic security and health challenges, making them more likely to need long-term services and supports. More than 90% of seniors have at least one chronic condition, 4.2 million adults over the age of 65 live in poverty, the unemployment rate of low-income older workers is nearly three times higher than the overall jobless rate, and one in seven seniors struggles with hunger.

Extending, or cutting, already insufficient funding for programs that address these complex needs fails to recognize our nation's changing demographics or the needs of seniors and their families. Prolonging these cuts through repeated continuing resolutions only fails to address these systemic inadequacies.

## **FY 2015 Requests**

Therefore, **we respectfully ask you to advance an omnibus spending bill that, at a minimum, restores the remainder of FY 2015 funding for Older Americans Act programs to pre-sequester FY 2010 levels.**

In addition to supporting the OAA, we request that you provide the first appropriations for the Elder Justice Act since its enactment in 2010, by funding a total of \$25 million for the **Elder Justice Initiative** proposed by the Administration.

We also support several funding proposals critical to the health and economic security of older Americans, including the request of \$20 million in mandatory funding for the further development of **Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)**. Current mandatory funding for the ADRCs expired on September 30, and absent that funding in FY 2015, we urge you to continue the ADRC investment without interruption, by appropriating a total of at least \$16 million to sustain current funding levels for these “no wrong door” networks.

We also urge you to adopt the Senate FY 2015 bill’s rejection of the following two budget request proposals. If enacted, the significant restructuring of and reduced investments in **Senior Corps** (comprising three senior volunteer programs administered by the Corp. for National and Community Service: RSVP, Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions), as well as the cut in the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP, OAA Title V)**, would undermine the engagement and employment opportunities of low-income older adults and eliminate millions of paid and volunteer hours that local organizations rely on to serve the most vulnerable children and seniors in their communities.

Further, we request that the allocation from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPH Fund) for **Chronic Disease Self-Management Education** be increased to a FY 2015 total of \$16 million, in order to restore resources to the level utilized in FY 2010 and FY 2011. We appreciate the new allocation of \$5 million from the PPH Fund for **Elder Falls Prevention**, and urge continued support for the proposal included in the past three Senate Labor-HHS bills that provided a total allocation of \$10 million to fund activities at both the Administration for Community Living and the Centers for Disease Control. Along with the allocation for Alzheimer’s, these are the only PPH Fund resources which primarily benefit seniors. There is strong evidence that these prevention investments improve health outcomes and reduce medical costs and Medicare spending.

Though not exhaustive of the interests of LCAO members, collectively or individually, please refer to the LCAO response to the President’s FY 2015 budget request for information about additional funding proposals we support and oppose: <http://www.lcao.org/files/2014/04/Letter-to-President-Obama-on-FY-2015-Budget.pdf>

While we recognize the difficult fiscal and scheduling constraints under which you are operating, we respectfully ask you to recognize the importance of programs that improve the health and well-being of seniors and their families. Without your investment in these initiatives and your commitment to pursuing an omnibus appropriations bill for the duration of FY 2015, valuable services that shelter older Americans against hunger, isolation, poor health, neglect, abuse, unemployment, and other challenges will continue to be jeopardy.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you to ensure a sustained investment in the OAA and related programs.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research  
Alliance for Retired Americans  
Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA)  
AMDA-The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine  
American Geriatric Society (AGS)  
American Postal Workers Retirees (APWU)  
American Society on Aging (ASA)  
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores (ANNPM) / National Association for Hispanic Elderly  
B'nai B'rith International  
Center for Elder Care and Advanced Illness, Altarum Institute  
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.  
Easter Seals  
Experience Works  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
LeadingAge  
Lutheran Services in America (LSA)  
Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)  
Medicare Rights Center  
National Academy for Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA)  
National Adult Day Services Associations (NADSA)  
National Alliance for Caregiving  
National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC)  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)  
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers (NANASP)  
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM)  
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc. (NARSVPD)  
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)  
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)  
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD)  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)  
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care  
National Council on Aging (NCOA)  
National Senior Citizens Law Center (NSCLC)  
National Senior Corps Association (NSCA)  
OWL – The Voice for Women 40+  
Pension Rights Center  
PHI – Quality Care through Quality Jobs

Senior Service America, Inc.

Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Elders (SAGE)

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

Volunteers of America (VOA)

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)

Women's Institute for A Secure Retirement (WISER)