

November 16, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Cole and Blunt and Ranking Members DeLauro and Murray:

As you work to finalize the fiscal year (FY) 2017 appropriations process, the undersigned organizations that serve and advocate for older workers urge you to fund the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) at no less than \$434,371,000, the level recommended in the U.S. House's version of the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill (H.R. 5926).

SCSEP is the only federal job training program focused exclusively on helping older Americans return to the workforce. Through the program, low-income jobseekers, 55 years old or older, update their skills and contribute to their communities through paid on-the-job training. The program serves underserved and most-in-need populations, including individuals with disabilities (20%), veterans (13%), individuals experiencing homelessness (53%), and residents of rural areas (28%). More than 67,000 older workers representing each state and nearly every county in the U.S. participated in SCSEP in program year 2015, contributing about 35 million hours of community support to libraries, senior centers, schools and other local organizations.¹

In April, Congress renewed this critical employment program through the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act (P.L. 114-144), recommending a nearly \$11 million increase (about 2.5%) for SCSEP in FY 2017. Additional funding would increase the number of older workers who could benefit from SCSEP training and supports. Stagnant funding over the past decade has resulted in a significant reduction in SCSEP training opportunities, from about 60,000 in 2005 to less than 45,000 in 2015.² An independent program evaluation found that current SCSEP funding covers less than one percent of eligible participants.³

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Service, [Final PY 2015 Statistics](#) (2016)

² U.S. Government Accountability Office Report [GAO-06-549T](#) (2006) & DOL [Final PY 2015 Statistics](#) (2016)

³ Mathematica [Evaluation of the Senior Community Service Employment Program](#) (2012)

We recognize the fiscal limitations of both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bills. We were pleased that the House Appropriations Committee recommended the same level of funding for SCSEP in FY 2017 as it received last year. However, the \$34 million cut proposed in the Senate Labor-HHS-Education bill would result in about 5,300 fewer jobs for low-income older workers. **As you work out the differences between the two bills, we respectfully ask that you provide no less than \$434,371,000 for SCSEP in the final FY 2017 bill.**

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our organizations if you seek additional information about SCSEP. If you have further questions, please contact Maynard Friesz at 202-403-8345 or mfriesz@easterseals.com.

Sincerely,

Adult Learning Partners, LLC
Compassion & Choices
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
Easterseals
Goodwill Industries International
LeadingAge
National Able Network
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Association of RSVP Directors
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD)
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging, Inc.
National Council for Adult Learning
National Council on Aging
National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)
National Urban League
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
Senior Service America, Inc.
SER-Jobs for Progress National, Inc.
The Jewish Federations of North America
The WorkPlace