

November 5, 2019

The Hon. Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
The Hon. Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
The Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Lamar Alexander, Chairman
The Hon. Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Bobby Scott, Chairman
The Hon. Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx:

On behalf of the undersigned 102 national organizations with a vested interest in the well-being of America's older adults and caregivers, we write to you today in support of the *Dignity in Aging Act* (H.R. 4334) to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA), which received unanimous support in the House on October 28.

We thank you for working in a bipartisan, bicameral manner to advance a 2019 reauthorization of Older Americans Act, which expired on September 30. Achieving a reauthorization of this critical Act that reaffirms and protects its mission will ensure the sustainability of vital OAA programs, as well as the health, dignity, and independence of older Americans and their caregivers who depend on them.

The OAA is essential to developing, coordinating, and delivering home and community-based services that help older adults age with independence and dignity in their homes and communities. Many individuals served by OAA-funded programs are at significant risk of hunger, isolation, abuse, and losing their ability to live with health and independence. OAA-supported programs are provided to more than 11 million seniors and their caregivers annually. These vital supports include, but are not limited to, home-delivered and congregate nutrition services, in-home supportive services, multipurpose senior centers, transportation, caregiver support, disease prevention and health promotion, community service employment, the long-term care ombudsman program, and services to prevent the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults.

By keeping seniors healthy and in their communities for more than 50 years, OAA programs have delayed or prevented the need for more expensive institutional care for many older adults, which is often paid for through Medicare or Medicaid. OAA services can effectively save taxpayer, state, and federal dollars. In addition to helping older adults age in place where they most often want to be, OAA programs

have improved our country's fiscal future and promoted efficiencies within the health care system by preventing unnecessary hospital stays, reducing readmission rates, coordinating care, and managing care transitions.

We appreciate the bipartisan manner in which Leaders and Members of the House approved the *Dignity in Aging Act*, H.R. 4334. This legislation to reauthorize the OAA builds upon the early bipartisan Senate draft bill and incorporates a number of important priorities articulated by stakeholder organizations. Moving forward, we understand that the Senate is considering its reauthorization process and appreciate the opportunity to work with Senate leadership on a bill that will garner bipartisan support in both chambers. However, we urge lawmakers in the Senate to incorporate the priorities reflected in H.R. 4334 into a compromise bill.

Most importantly, the *Dignity in Aging Act* calls for much-needed and necessary investments in the OAA by increasing funding authorizations over the next five years—a top priority of the undersigned organizations and the most critical need of the Aging Services Network authorized by the OAA.

Other priority areas include research innovation and demonstrations, Native American services, local planning and development, supports for those suffering from dementias and social isolation, legal services, nutrition, in-home supportive services, disease prevention and health promotion, multigenerational collaboration, and family caregiver supports. We appreciate that both the House and Senate proposals to reauthorize the OAA have preserved the numerous ways in which this Act works so well at the federal, state, and local level, on behalf of the older adults and caregivers for whom it is a lifeline to dignity, independence, health, safety, and economic security.

Thank you for your commitment to this important issue. The undersigned organizations represent a diverse set of stakeholders, and we stand ready to build upon existing momentum to swiftly advance a bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act through the full Senate and to the President's desk.

Sincerely,

AARP

Academy of Geriatric Physical Therapy (a component of the American Physical Therapy Association)

ADvancing States

African Americans Against Alzheimer's

Aging and Vision Loss National Coalition

AHEPA Management Company (AMC)

Alliance for Aging Research

Alliance to End Hunger

Allies for Independence

ALS Association

Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement

Alzheimer's Foundation of America

American Association of Service Coordinators
American Association on Health and Disability
American Geriatrics Society
American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (Order of AHEPA)
American Medical Women's Association
American Music Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP)
American Society on Aging
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Autism Society of America
Baylor Scott & White Health
Better Medicare Alliance
Blinded Veterans Association
Bread for the World
Caregiver Action Network
Caregiver Voices United
Caring with Grace, LLC
CaringKind, the Heart of Alzheimer's Caregiving
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Center for Public Representation
Center to Advance Palliative Care
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Coalition on Human Needs
Collective Action Lab
CommunicationFIRST
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congressional Hunger Center
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
Daughters of Penelope
Dementia Alliance International
Easterseals
Eisai Inc.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Feeding America
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Home Instead Senior Care
International Association for Indigenous Aging
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Justice in Aging
Lakeshore Foundation
LEAD Coalition (Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer's Disease)
LeadingAge
Livpact Inc.
Lutheran Services in America
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Meals on Wheels America

Medicare Rights Center
Mercy Housing, Inc.
Michigan State College of Human Medicine Alzheimer's Alliance
National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)
National Adult Protective Services Association
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)
National Association of Activity Professionals
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Counties
National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)
National Certification Council for Activity Professionals
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council on Aging
National Health Council
National Recreation and Park Association
National Respite Coalition
NETWORK Lobby
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies, Inc.
PHI
Prevent Blindness
RESULTS
Society for the Blind
The American Network of Community Options & Resources (ANCOR)
The Episcopal Church
The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society
The Gerontological Society of America
The Jewish Federations of North America
Trust for America's Health
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Spinal Association
USF Health Byrd Alzheimer's Institute
Village to Village Network
VisionServe Alliance
Volunteers of America

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Members of the House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor