

April 26, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned organizations that serve and advocate for older Americans seek your support for job training and employment supports for unemployed older Americans available through the U.S. Department of Labor's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). **We respectfully ask that you fund SCSEP in your fiscal year 2020 appropriations bill at no less than \$463,809,605, the level Congress last recommended for SCSEP in the bipartisan Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act (P.L. 114-144).**

Older Americans who were displaced from their jobs or who have significant employment barriers struggle to get hired. The low national unemployment rate exacerbates these challenges as there is more competition for available jobs and current openings may require additional skills. The reemployment rates for displaced older workers, particularly those 65 years and over, was much lower than younger displaced workers. Only 3 in 10 displaced workers age 65 or older found work compared to nearly 8 in 10 younger workers (25 to 54), according to a [2018 Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\) report](#). Older jobseekers also continue to experience long-term unemployment at greater rates, with 28.4 percent of individuals age 55 and older looking for work for [seven months or more as of March 2019](#), compared to 20.4 percent of those age 16 to 54. A [bipartisan U.S. Senate Aging Committee report](#) pointed to inadequate training opportunities, age discrimination, and balancing caregiving responsibilities and their own health conditions and disabilities as the main challenges facing an aging workforce.

SCSEP is a critical component in our nation's workforce development system that is helping to address the employment challenges of older Americans and the workforce needs of America's employers.

SCSEP prepares unemployed older adults, age 55 and older, for employment through paid, on-the-job work experiences at community nonprofits or agencies, such as libraries, schools, or senior centers. Unlike the general workforce development system, SCSEP is required to serve most-in-need older adults, many who enter the program with [three or more significant barriers](#) to employment. During the last program year, SCSEP provided employment supports to individuals with low employment prospects (92%), who lived below the poverty line (88%), had disabilities (24%), who were homeless or at-risk of homelessness (58%), and who resided in rural areas (26%) or in areas of persistent unemployment (19%). In addition, nearly seven in 10 SCSEP participants were women and one in 10 was a veteran.

Each year, the Senior Community Service Employment Program is successful in finding jobs for older adults who entered the program with limited or no employment prospects. During the past

program year, more than 8,000 businesses and organizations hired one or more SCSEP participants, including large employers like Home Depot and Walmart and local employers such as Casey's General Store in Missouri and Narrows Plaza Bowl in Washington. On average, the older adults who were hired following their SCSEP training earned [\\$11.05 an hour](#), with most [\(69%\)](#) remaining on the job one year after exiting SCSEP. In addition to serving as a local source of qualified job candidates, SCSEP also represents a strong federal return on investment, with SCSEP participants earning more in their first year on the job than the annual SCSEP training costs, according to a [2017 Urban Institute study](#).

We appreciate the support Congress gave to SCSEP in fiscal year 2019. However, the current level of funding of \$400 million fails to meet the growing need, the rising cost of training, or the modest recommendations Congress set a few years ago through the last Older Americans Act reauthorization.

SCSEP sustained a \$34 million cut in FY 2017. Subsequent appropriations have failed to make up for that significant loss. With about 75 percent of all SCSEP funds allocated for participant training wages, funding cuts are felt directly by the unemployed older adults who train through the program. About 10,000 fewer older adults received job training and earned paychecks through SCSEP during the last program year than two years ago: [65,060 older adults in PY 2015 compared to 56,265 in PY 2017](#). In addition, participant training hours are regularly reduced due to limited resources, making it more difficult for older adults in the program to update their skills and find employment success. Stagnant funding throughout the entire workforce development system has worsened the situation, especially for SCSEP-eligible older adults, who often are referred to SCSEP after [failing](#) to find employment through a general workforce system program.

We recognize the lower Budget Control Act caps that are set to take effect in FY 2020. Our organizations support bipartisan efforts to raise the discretionary funding caps, particularly for employment and other non-defense priorities, to ensure your Subcommittee has the resources it needs to fulfill our funding request for SCSEP in FY 2020.

Our organizations are pleased to share additional information with you on SCSEP to help support our funding request of no less than \$463,809,605 in FY 2020. Your staff can reach out to any of our organizations directly or through Maynard Friesz at 202-403-8345 or mfriesz@easterseals.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Easterseals
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Institute for Indian Development, Inc.
International Association for Indigenous Aging
Justice in Aging
National Able Network
National Adult Protective Services Association
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)
National Association For Hispanic Elderly

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Development Organizations
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Association of Regional Councils
National Association of RSVP Directors
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging
National Council on Aging
National Farmers Union
National Skills Coalition
National Urban League
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
SER-Jobs for Progress National Inc.
The Jewish Federations of North America
The WorkPlace Inc.
Vantage Aging and Vantage Workforce Solutions
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)