



February 4, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx:

On behalf of the National Council on Aging, I am writing to express our strong support for the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020. Your tireless efforts to craft a bipartisan, bicameral agreement to extend and enhance home and community services for our nation's older adults is to be commended.

The leadership of your colleagues who introduced your respective chamber's Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization legislation and coordinated the input of members on and off your Committees must also be noted. We are grateful for the commitment of Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee Chair Bonamici, Subcommittee member Stefanik, Select Committee on Aging Chair Collins and Ranking Member Casey for their dedication to the aging services that millions of older adults rely on each day.

Over 11 million older adults and their caregivers benefit from OAA programs administered by the nationwide Aging Services Network (ASN), including senior centers, healthy aging programs, nutrition, in-home services, transportation, caregiver support, and elder abuse protections. Many of the individuals served are at risk of hunger, poverty, chronic and fatal health conditions, isolation, and losing their ability to live with health, dignity, and independence.

Reauthorization is a crucial opportunity for Congress to modernize and improve services by supporting efficiencies and innovations, reassessing the Act's successes and limitations, and addressing the ability to effectively serve older adults in need. We are pleased that many of NCOA's priorities for this reauthorization were included in the final legislation, including:

- Authorizing a distinct center within the Administration on Aging to lead robust aging services research and development efforts to evaluate and support scaling of evidence-based interventions and innovations that can improve wellness and quality of life, reduce Medicare or Medicaid costs, and promote independence and healthy aging.

- Strengthening the OAA's focus on healthy aging with specific authorizations for the current falls promotion and chronic disease self-management education competitive grant programs, coordination of federal efforts on behalf of falls prevention and home modifications, and recognition of the role the ASN plays in addressing pain management, public health emergencies and emerging health threats.
- Protecting the crucial services of the OAA and providing a path for future investments, including for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) which delivers crucial workforce development opportunities to low-income older workers with significant barriers to employment and economic security.

The legislation also addresses a number of the priorities endorsed by the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), of which NCOA is a leading member. These include social determinants of health, social isolation, caregiver support, elder justice and legal services, multigenerational collaboration, and services for Native Americans and other underserved populations.

NCOA urges expedient Senate and House passage of this important legislation in the coming days, and we stand ready to continue bipartisan discussions on implementation and investment in these notable OAA improvements.

Sincerely,



James P. Firman, Ed.D.
President and CEO
National Council on Aging

cc:

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives