



December 2, 2024

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

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

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Cassidy, Chair Foxx, and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the National Council on Aging (NCOA), I am pleased to endorse the bicameral amendment to S. 4776, Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2024 and urge its swift passage by Congress.

For over sixty years, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has funded critical services that keep our nation's seniors healthy and independent--services like meals, job training, senior centers, health promotion, benefits enrollment, direct care training, and more. OAA provides the foundation on which federal, state and local organizations deliver critical services for older adults and caregivers. The continued strong bipartisan support and commitment to an upward trajectory of investment for OAA programs are critical for OAA's reauthorization.

NCOA's 2024 reauthorization priorities include honoring the OAA commitment to multipurpose senior centers, expanding the reach of healthy aging programs, strengthening our nation's care infrastructure, and expanding the only federal program focused on the employment of low-income older workers. We appreciate that our proposals were reflected as follows:

Senior Centers: NCOA applauds the assurances regarding III-B expenditures and language enhancing the role of community-based organizations in OAA service delivery and strategies.

Healthy Aging: NCOA supports the reinforcement of crucial technical assistance for implementation of evidence-based programs and providing flexibility to consider evidence-informed healthy aging practices. In addition, we welcome the expansion of falls prevention demonstration authority, improvements in language related to mental health and infectious diseases, options to deliver medically-tailored meals, and support for safe and healthy homes.

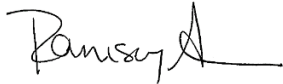
Direct Care Workforce: NCOA appreciates the provisions that strengthen authorities for sustained funding for the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center.

Older Workers: NCOA welcomes language that highlights the role that the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) plays in supporting the aging services workforce; iterates the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services should be made available to older workers; and calls for a GAO report to distinguish SCSEP from WIOA. We believe that that the program continues to produce tangible successes for the low-income workers with multiple barriers to employment it serves, and the unique goals, delivery strategies, and appropriate performance measures this population deserves must be preserved

Federal leadership and coordination: NCOA applauds the thoughtful authorization of the next White House Conference on Aging and calls for efforts to raise awareness about OAA programs.

As America enters a historic surge of more than 4.1 million Americans turning 65 each year through 2027, a commitment to the Older Americans Act is crucial. With over 11,200 Americans turning 65 every day, chronic conditions are the leading cause of frailty, disability, and death in the United States, and 80 percent of older adults experience two or more. Senior centers serve as a gateway to the nation's aging network-connecting older adults to vital community services. However, multipurpose senior centers, which are hubs of engagement in communities across the country, continue to be underfunded, particularly in areas of greatest need. Older adults also continue to struggle with long-term unemployment of 27 weeks or longer at higher rates than their younger counterparts. As of June 2024, one million older workers aged 55 and older were still unemployed, compared to 19 percent of workers aged 16 to 54. The National Council on Aging continues its decades-long commitment to the OAA and stands ready to continue our collaboration to advance this reauthorization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ramsey Alwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ramsey Alwin
President and CEO