



Swift Advocacy Needed!

Help Us Keep Older Americans Act, ARPA Match Waiver in Build Back Better Plan

November 1, 2021

This is an all-hands-on-deck situation!

As we [reported on Friday](#), significant funding for the Older Americans Act is currently in President Biden's Build Back Better (BBB) bill that went to House Rules Committee last week. However, as Democrats scramble to make final deals—and other advocates fight to get their dropped priorities back in the bill—it is far from a certainty that the OAA funding will be preserved. And that's why we need your voice now!

The OAA funding in the measure, as detailed in our [September 10 Legislative Update](#) for USAging members, totals \$1.2 billion for *new* Older Americans Act funding that is in addition to regular annual appropriations. The provisions also include a retroactive waiver of state and local match requirements on the American Rescue Plan Act relief funding provided by Congress in the spring—a congressional oversight that USAging and our national partners have been working to remedy ever since.

USAging's other top priority for this bill is to secure **OAA Title III B Supportive Services** funding, in part to help AAAs be positioned to better address workforce shortages; the current version has an incredible \$655 million for III B, **the most ever provided**. We argued that since the BBB also wisely invests in the Medicaid HCBS workforce (currently \$150 billion), it was especially critical to ensure that the OAA workforce is not inadvertently negatively affected. In addition, there is \$50 million in funding for **OAA Title VI Native American Aging Programs**, a huge investment in the capacity and workforce for these vital tribal programs.

However, until the BBB plan reaches its final version and votes are cast, we cannot assume OAA funding and other aging infrastructure investments

are safe from cuts or complete elimination. The BBB and the bipartisan infrastructure bill are expected to come to votes in the House this week. Aging advocates will need to remain vigilant in our advocacy efforts, particularly as we turn to key Democrats in Congress to champion these aging infrastructure investments. (Note: No Republicans have or will support the BBB, hence our targeted advocacy.)

This means we need you to take action today—and engage your local networks to take action as well!

Action Steps

It is imperative that all Senators and Representatives hear from their OAA champions. However, given that BBB is a solely Democratic bill, the messages you convey will be different based on the party of your congressional delegation. For those with Republican Senators and Representatives, please know that it is still an important educational and relationship-building task to make this outreach, as they need to know where the need is in your district/state and how this bill may help meet it, AND it reinforces your role as experts on aging and champions for older adults and caregivers.

STEP 1: Call your Members of Congress today in their DC offices. Find direct contact information on your Members' websites (www.house.gov and www.senate.gov) or simply call the Capitol Switchboard at 202.224.3121.

Use the talking points below to convey your message, then follow up with an email to reinforce the importance of this issue if you can.

STEP 2: Make Your Support for OAA Funding Public. Post a short, positive note to *Democratic* lawmakers on social media. Members' staff monitor these messages closely. Here's an example but be sure to include your Member's social media handle in the post. "[Senator Smith's handle], please ensure that #OlderAmericansAct workforce and #infrastructure investments and #MedicaidHCBS stay in the #BuildBackBetter bill! The #OlderAdults we serve rely on #OAA to age well at home."

STEP 3: Engage Your Provider Network. Urge your providers, advisory board members and other important stakeholders to make their own calls to Congress or social media posts. Please do all you can to amplify the message and engage others who understand the value of OAA in their community! You're welcome to forward this *Alert* to your networks or edit it to be best received by your advocates.

Talking Points for Calls and Emails

For Democrats:

"Hello, I am **NAME** from **AGENCY NAME** in **CITY, STATE**. We serve NUMBER of older adults and caregivers by creating options that help enable older adults to age well in their homes. I am calling [or emailing] you to ask you to help preserve the funding for the Older Americans Act that is currently in the House Build Back Better bill. This bill includes funding for in-home services, transportation, nutrition, caregiver services and the workforce that provides these essential supports and represents a critical investment in our nation's non-Medicaid aging services workforce and infrastructure. This funding is critical to balance the vital investments made for aging Americans in Medicaid home and community-based services. To be successful, Build Back Better's plan to strengthen the care workforce must include these OAA investments, otherwise the intent to improve access will unintentionally fail and harm older adults *not* on Medicaid benefits. **AGENCY NAME** relies on these federal funds to leverage state and local funding and, most importantly, to provide the home and community-based services that many older adults need in order to remain healthy at home, thus avoiding more expensive institutional care. Please do what you can to ensure that the Older Americans Act funds remain in the bill as it moves through Congress!"

For Republicans:

"Hello, I am **NAME** from **AGENCY NAME** in **CITY, STATE**. We serve NUMBER of older adults and caregivers by creating options for aging well at home. I am calling [or emailing] you to let you know that there is critical funding for the Older Americans Act currently in the House Build Back Better bill. This funding for in-home services, transportation, nutrition, caregiver services and much more represents a critical investment in our nation's non-Medicaid aging services workforce and infrastructure. We rely on these federal funds to leverage state and local funding and, most importantly, to provide the home and community-based services that many older adults need in order to remain healthy at home, thus avoiding more expensive institutional care which usually leads to Medicaid spend down. While I know the overall bill is a Democratic priority, Older Americans Act has always had bipartisan support, and I wanted to make sure you and your staff are aware that these provisions could bring significant new resources to our state and allow us to better serve STATE's older adults. Thank you and please know that if you ever have questions about our agency's work, please reach out. I am happy to connect with you on these and other issues affecting older adults in **CITY, STATE**."

Time is short and we need all AAAs, Title VI Native American programs and local allies to raise their voices in support of Older Americans Act funding. **We must ensure that all Members of Congress know how important this longer-term investment in the OAA workforce and infrastructure is to promote the health, well-being and independence of their older constituents and those who care for them.**

If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert* or USAgings' policy positions, please contact Amy Gotwals at agotwals@usaging.org and

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