



## **Your Advocacy Needed BEFORE the Holidays!**

***Tell Your Senators to Pass the Build Back Better Act Now***

**December 13, 2021**

Are you ready for winter? Because we need to generate a blizzard of advocacy before Congress heads home for the holidays!

Even with its recent [passage in the House](#), the trajectory of the \$1.75 trillion Build Back Better Act (BBB) is uncertain as we watch the Senate consider its political viability. What is certain is that Senate committees are smack dab in the middle of conversations, negotiations and parliamentarian opinions on this critical social spending bill that contains \$1.2 billion of hard-fought Older Americans Act (OAA) provisions. The additional OAA funding included in this bill is even more essential for the older adults you serve as FY 2022 appropriations decisions are [delayed, once again](#), until February—but also represents game-changing longer-term investments in the Aging Network that will improve your ability to serve growing numbers of older adults over the next several years.

So we need your advocacy now, *today*, to urge the Senate to pass this critical investment and to pass it *before* it adjourns for the year.

The OAA funding in the measure, as detailed in our [September 10 Legislative Update](#) for USAging members, 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. BBB funding also recognizes caregiving as infrastructure—providing better support for family caregivers, better pay for home health workers and getting eligible people off Medicaid waiting lists—essential care infrastructure that we need Congress to pass sooner rather than later.

**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. Additionally, the longer BBB is under**

**consideration, the less likely it will come to fruition given the many competing priorities Congress will likely face next year!**

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

## **Action Steps**

### **Urge your Senators to support the BBB’s increased investments in the OAA!**

If you have a Democratic Senator(s): It is imperative that Senate Democrats hear from their OAA champions, urging them to pass BBB ASAP.

If you have a Republican Senator(s): While there is zero Republican support in Congress for the President’s Build Back Better legislative package, it’s still important that you communicate with your Republican Senators on how Medicaid HCBS and the challenges of the direct care workforce affect their constituents. Doing so will not only educate them about the needs of older adults and people with disabilities, but it will help you build relationships for these and future advocacy needs!

**STEP 1: Call your Senators **today** in their DC offices.** The Capitol Switchboard (202.224.3121) can connect you to your Senator’s DC offices or you can use [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) to look up their websites to send emails.

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. Be sure to include your Member’s social media handle in the post.

SAMPLE: “[**Senator Smith’s handle**], please pass BBB today! BBB will increase #OlderAdults access to home & community-based services and increase the number and quality of direct care jobs in all states.”

**STEP 3: Engage Your Provider Network.** Urge your providers, advisory board members and other important stakeholders to call their Senators or post on social media. Please do all you can to amplify the message and engage others who understand the value of OAA in their community! To help, we encourage you 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** 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 pass the House's Build Back Better bill now, not later. 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. **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 to age well and remain healthy at home, thus avoiding more expensive institutional care. Please do what you can to pass this critical care infrastructure investment and ensure that the Older Americans Act funds remain in the bill!"

**For Republicans:**

"Hello, I am **NAME** from **AGENCY NAME** in **CITY, STATE**. We serve **NUMBER** 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 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.

**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 to age well and 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, the 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 expeditious passage of BBB. **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.**

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**If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert*** or USAging's policy positions, please contact Amy Gotwals at [agotwals@usaging.org](mailto:agotwals@usaging.org) and Monica Billger at [mbillger@usaging.org](mailto:mbillger@usaging.org).