



Leaders in Aging Well at Home

April 14, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chair
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chair Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As your subcommittees consider the FY 2024 Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bills in the coming months, USAgging urges you to prioritize Older Americans Act (OAA) and other programs that provide a range of critical services to support older adults in aging successfully at home and in their communities. USAgging represents the country's 614 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and advocates for the more than 280 Title VI Native American Aging Programs. Our members are the local leaders that develop, coordinate and deliver a wide range of home and community-based services, including information and referral/assistance, case management, home-delivered and congregate meals, in-home services, caregiver supports, transportation, evidence-based health and wellness programs, long-term care ombudsman programs and more.

Older Americans Act

The OAA is the cornerstone of the nation's non-Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) system. Each year, through the OAA, nearly 11 million older Americans receive critical support from the nationwide Aging Network, which consists of states, AAAs, Title VI programs and tens of thousands of local service providers. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the Aging Network has served more older adults than ever before by providing life-saving services thanks to federal emergency relief funds and rapid innovation to meet the growing demand for services. High levels of need experienced by older adults have not faded away, however, and AAAs continue to serve an increasing number of older adults, with demographic

trends only pointing to further escalation of need for these critical home and community-based services in the near future.

The increased investment will provide longer-term value. OAA services like those provided by AAAs can delay or prevent the need for higher level or more expensive (i.e., nursing home) care, postponing impoverishment and eligibility for the means-tested Medicaid long-term care program. By supporting the health of older adults through evidence-based wellness programs, nutrition services, medication management and other services, OAA programs save Medicare—and the nation—money.

It's time for a reset to expand the reach of and investment in these OAA programs to reflect the realities of a rapidly aging nation. As you determine the wisest FY 2024 appropriations levels, USAging urges your subcommittees to adopt the highest possible funding levels for all OAA programs and services.

While all OAA subtitles require immediate increase to meet the current and future needs of older adults, on behalf of our AAA and Title VI Native American Aging Program members, **USAging urges Congress to prioritize the following OAA services** when developing the FY 2024 budget for the U.S. Administration on Aging, housed within the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services:

- **Title III B Home and Community-Based Supportive Services, \$820 million**
- **Title VI Grants for Native American Aging Programs, \$76.5 million for Part A (nutrition and supportive services) and \$24 million for Part C (family caregiver support)**
- **Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program, \$410 million**

Additional details regarding our requests follow, which we hope will be helpful as you develop FY 2024 Labor/HHS/Education spending bills.

OAA Title III B Supportive Services is the bedrock of the Older Americans Act, providing states and local agencies with flexible funding to provide a wide range of supportive services to older Americans, which include in-home services for frail older adults, senior transportation programs, Information and Referral/Assistance services (e.g., hotlines to help people find local services, resources), case management, home modification and repair, chore services, legal services, emergency/disaster response efforts and other person-centered approaches to helping older adults age well at home. Services provided through Title III B are a lifeline

for older adults living in the community, and they also connect older adults to other OAA services—for example transportation services funded by Title III B ensure older adults can reach congregate meal sites funded by OAA Title III C.

The critical flexibility of this funding stream gives AAAs greater means to meet the needs of older adults at home and in the community, thereby eliminating the need for more expensive nursing home care—which usually leads to impoverishment and a subsequent need to rely on Medicaid to meet critical health care needs. The flexibility of OAA Title III B also allows AAAs to meet new and emerging needs in their communities, such as wellness checks for homebound older adults, activities to help older adults stay socially engaged (historically in-person but now also virtual programming) and supporting vaccine outreach and assistance. However, years of eroded funding prior to COVID-19 have resulted in local agencies losing ground in their ability to provide critical Title III B Supportive Services.

To meet the high and rising demand for cost-effective supportive services, we call on you to double OAA Title III B over FY 2023 levels in FY 2024, for a funding level of \$820 million.

OAA Title VI Native American Aging Programs are a primary authority for funding aging services in Indian Country, where elders are the poorest in the nation. Title VI Part A largely provides nutrition services but also provides wraparound supportive services such as those found in Title III B. Title VI Part C funds family caregiver support programs for those caring for older adults, as well as older adults caring for adult children with disabilities or grandchildren or relative children. These services are intended to supplement the overall OAA programs and services by giving tribes added resources to respond to the most urgent needs of older adults in Indian Country.

We urge you to double funding for Title VI over FY 2023 in FY 2024 to reach at least \$76.5 million for Part A (nutrition and supportive services) and \$24 million for Part C (family caregiver support).

Through the OAA's Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), those who care for friends and family members as they age receive support through training, respite, support groups and other programs. There are an estimated 53 million unpaid caregivers in the U.S. AARP estimates that family caregivers provide \$600 billion worth of support to friends and family annually. The financial value of this unpaid care rivals the entire federal Medicaid budget. Whether they recognize it or not, communities, states and the federal government depend on the work of

unpaid caregivers to meet the HCBS needs of our nation's growing aging population.

The NFCSP funds local AAAs to assist older caregivers and family members caring for older loved ones by offering a range of in-demand supports to family caregivers in every community. Steady and sustained increases are needed to adequately invest in this modest federal program that now supports just a fraction of the 41.8 million caregivers for people age 50 and older and could prevent billions in more expensive institutional care costs that rely on taxpayer funding.

For FY 2024, we encourage you to double over-FY 2023 appropriations for the National Family Caregiver Support Program to reach \$410 million, which is the only national program supporting the family caregivers of older adults who provide the lion's share of long-term care in this country.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Amy Gotwals, Chief, Public Policy and External Affairs, and Olivia Umoren, Director, Public Policy and Advocacy, policy@usaging.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Markwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc:

Chair Patty Murray, Senate Appropriations Committee
Vice Chair Susan Collins, Senate Appropriations Committee
Chair Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee
Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Committee
Members of the House and Senate Labor/HHS/Education Subcommittees