House Begins Older Americans Act Reauthorization With Hearing; n4a Member to Testify on Role of Area Agencies on Aging

Washington, DC – The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) commends the House Education and Workforce Committee for formally beginning the process for reauthorizing the Older Americans Act (OAA), one of the most effective and vital laws serving older adults and caregivers today. The Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training will hold a hearing entitled “Serving Seniors through the Older Americans Act” today, and a live webcast is available beginning at 10:00 a.m. ET. (Subcommittee)

The panel assembled to testify includes national experts along with representatives of the local entities responsible for planning and developing OAA programs and services (Area Agencies on Aging) and delivering these critical supports to older adults and caregivers (service providers). n4a is especially pleased that Lynn Kellogg, CEO of the Region IV Area Agency on Aging in St. Joseph, Michigan, a long-time n4a member and Aging Network leader, will present testimony on how the OAA uses Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to effectively develop local delivery networks to serve more than 8 million older adults and family caregivers. Ms. Kellogg has been in the field of aging for 37 years and is well-known locally as an innovator and advocate and nationally as a leader in the field of aging. Ms. Kellogg previously served as n4a’s President and currently sits on the boards of numerous local organizations. She holds BSW and MPA degrees from Western Michigan University, and is a caregiver for her 93-year-old mother.

Since its inception in 1965, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has been the foundation of our national system of home and community-based services for older Americans. The OAA provides funding to states for a range of community planning and service programs to older Americans at risk of losing their independence, as well as the caregivers who support them. Since its enactment, the OAA has been amended 15 times, most recently in 2006, to expand the scope of services, increase local control and responsibility, and add more protections for the elderly.

After extensive surveying of its members, n4a developed its policy recommendations for the reauthorization in 2011. n4a CEO Sandy Markwood notes that “Since that time, we have worked extensively with Senate and House lawmakers to explore how this reauthorization process can build on the tremendous success of the OAA and ensure that the Aging Network can meet the needs of the current and future populations of older adults and their caregivers.” n4a’s recommendations include adding language to the OAA that strengthens the Aging Network’s role and capacity in the coordination and provision of long-term services and supports; expands local evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention activities; improves community
preparedness for an aging population; and sets appropriate authorized funding levels, among other proposals.

Since their creation in the Older Americans Act amendments of 1973, **Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)** have developed and coordinated a wide array of local home and community-based services for older adults and caregivers. While the core mission has not changed, over time the OAA has broadened the scope of core services provided by all AAAs. Gradually, these have been augmented by a range of other services financed by various sources. Today, 618 AAAs operate complex service delivery systems that provide access to community-based, in-home and elder rights services.

As custodians of the public interest, AAAs demonstrate responsible fiscal stewardship by leveraging and maximizing use of public and private funding to serve as many older people as possible. Critical OAA services provided directly by AAAs or contracted to local providers include information and assistance; case management; transportation; nutrition; health promotion and disease prevention; caregiver support and respite; senior employment; legal services; elder abuse and neglect prevention; housing modification and repair; in-home chore services and more.

Additionally, 246 **Title VI Native American aging programs** are funded under Title VI of the OAA. These grants to Indian tribes, and Native Alaskan and Hawaiian nonprofits promote the delivery of nutrition, home and community-based supportive services and caregiver supports to Native American elders. Older American Indians are the most economically disadvantaged elders in the nation, and yet there has long been a lack of proper investment in Title VI.

n4a looks forward to working closely with the House Education and Workforce Committee, as well as all House Members, to reauthorize the OAA in a timely and bipartisan fashion.

“The nation’s older adults and caregivers—both today’s and tomorrow’s—are relying upon us,” noted Markwood.

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The **National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)** is the leading voice on aging issues for the 618 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) across the country and a champion for the 246 Title VI Native American aging programs. n4a’s primary mission is to build the capacity of its members to help older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible ([www.n4a.org](http://www.n4a.org) / [www.facebook.com/n4aACTION](http://www.facebook.com/n4aACTION)).

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