

Statement on the Introduction of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2013

May 23, 2013

The National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD) represents the 56 officially designated state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities. Each of our members oversees the implementation of the Older Americans Act (OAA), and many also serve as the operating agency in their state for Medicaid waivers that serve older adults and individuals with disabilities. Together with our members, we work to design, improve, and sustain state systems delivering home and community based services and supports for people who are older or have a disability, and their caregivers.

We applaud Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chairman of the Senate HELP Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging, for his leadership in championing OAA reauthorization in the 113th Congress with the introduction of the *Older Americans Act Amendments of 2013*. Though NASUAD believes the OAA works well and is fundamentally sound, we acknowledge that it could be improved to better serve current and future seniors and their families, and to reflect the new realities facing the ever-evolving Aging Network.

Accordingly, NASUAD is supportive of many provisions in the bill that Sen. Sanders introduced today, including those which seek to enhance administrative flexibility, modernize the Act, strengthen its core programs, and build the capacity of the Network to meet the needs of a growing, and increasingly diverse, population.

The OAA, and its reauthorization, enjoy a long history of bipartisan, bicameral support, and NASUAD remains committed to such a process in the current Congress. While we appreciate the introduction of the *Older Americans Act Amendments of 2013* as a significant first step in such a process, since our members are charged with administering OAA programs at the state level, it is with these obligations and responsibilities in mind that we are not able to endorse the legislation at this time.

We commend Sen. Sanders for his unwavering commitment to improving the lives of seniors, and we look forward to working with him and his colleagues in the House and Senate to advance reauthorization in a meaningful way. As such, we urge the leadership of the Senate HELP and House Education and Workforce Committees to take up this important issue, and to work together and with stakeholders towards a reauthorization that will strengthen and improve the OAA, as well as the health, independence, and dignity of those it serves.