

United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6400

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March 19, 2024

To interested parties:

Hoarding disorder (HD) is a chronic and progressive condition that leads people to accumulate more objects than their homes can accommodate.¹ HD impacts people of all ages. However, the prevalence of hoarding appears to be significantly greater for older adults (roughly 6.2 percent) compared to younger adults (roughly 2 percent).² The severity of hoarding behaviors exhibited by people with HD also generally increase with each decade of life, even as those behaviors typically emerge before the age of 20.³ Accordingly, some of the most severe cases of HD are among older adults.

The disproportionate prevalence and severity of HD among older adults has implications for our rapidly aging Nation. By 2060, the number of older adults in the United States is expected to increase by 40 million people compared to 2019.⁴ Because HD disproportionately impacts older adults, experts worry that aging “could fuel a rise in hoarding.”⁵ Local governments, emergency responders, and social service organizations are already witnessing the impact of HD on communities throughout our country. Those same groups will serve on the front lines of our response as HD becomes more common – yet it appears that their needs for addressing HD have received limited attention from Congress.

¹ David F. Tolin and Anna Villavicencio, “Inattention, But Not OCD, Predicts the Core Features of Hoarding Disorder,” *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 49, no. 2 (February 2011), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3038586/>.

² David M. Roane et al., “Hoarding in the Elderly: A Critical Review of the Recent Literature,” *International Psychogeriatrics* 29, no. 7 (2017) at 1080.

³ Linda M. Richmond, “Despite Addition to DSM, Few Treatments Emerge for Hoarding Disorder,” *Psychiatric News*, January 31, 2022, <https://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.pn.2022.1.18>.

⁴ “Promoting Health for Older Adults,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last reviewed September 8, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/promoting-health-for-older-adults.htm>.

⁵ Rose Conlon, “Hoarding May be Increasing Because of Aging Population, Scarce Mental Health Care,” *NPR*, September 7, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/09/07/1198065591/hoarding-may-be-increasing-because-of-aging-population-scarce-mental-health-care>.

The Senate Special Committee on Aging is charged with studying “any and all matters pertaining to problems and opportunities of older people,” including problems related to health, housing, care, and assistance.⁶ HD, and its potential impact on communities and older adults in the coming decades, intersects with all of those issues. Accordingly, the Committee is seeking information from stakeholders related to the impact of hoarding disorder.

Please e-mail written responses to the following inquiries to HoardingDisorder@aging.senate.gov no later than midnight on April 15, 2024. Please note that this request is voluntary, and that your responses may be referenced or shared as part of future Aging Committee efforts.

1. How has hoarding disorder impacted your community, particularly older adults and people with disabilities?
2. How has hoarding disorder impacted your organization, particularly in its ability to carry out its mission?
3. How has your organization responded to hoarding disorder, including through establishing any new or unique initiatives? What, if any, challenges has your organization faced while implementing that response?
4. How can the federal government help your organization assist older adults and others with hoarding disorder?

If feasible, please share data and primary source information related to the rate and impact of HD on your organization and community.

Thank you for your help with this matter. If you have questions about this request, please reach out to Doug Hartman on the Aging Committee staff at Doug_Hartman@aging.senate.gov.

⁶ “Rules,” United States Senate Special Committee on Aging, last accessed March 19, 2023, <https://www.aging.senate.gov/about/rules>.