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April 7, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy,
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro,
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby,
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger,
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman and Chairwoman Leahy and DeLauro, and Ranking Members Shelby and Granger:

On behalf of ADvancing States, I am writing to you in support of funding for important programs that serve older adults and people with disabilities in the FY2022 appropriations package. ADvancing States is a nonpartisan association of state government agencies that represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities. We work to support visionary state leadership, the advancement of state systems innovation, and the development of national policies that support home and community-based services for older adults and persons with disabilities. Our members administer a wide range of services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities, including overseeing Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and services in every state. Together with our members, we work to design, improve, and sustain state systems delivering long-term services and supports for people who are older or have a disability and for their caregivers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly illustrated the essential role that OAA programs play in supporting our nations seniors in times of crisis. The aging network has stepped up in myriad ways to meet the massive need and new demands for services that heretofore was unprecedented. The supplemental funding provided to states via the mechanism of the OAA have been instrumental in ensuring that older Americans are safe, fed, and receiving accurate information during this time of crisis.



In FY2021, the final Congressional Appropriations package maintained important and necessary increases to many OAA programs that serve older adults. We appreciate that Congress recognized the importance of these programs for older adults and people with disabilities and we thank you and your colleagues for supporting them. These additional resources have been essential to ensuring older adults receive critical services, such as home delivered meals, during the pandemic. Demand for OAA services will continue to remain high in FY2022 and beyond. Therefore, we request that you continue to support the OAA and related aging and disability services at amounts no less than the funding provided in the FY2021 appropriations bill.

Additionally, we wish to highlight three important areas that would benefit from increased investments through the appropriations process. These include Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services authorized by Title III-D of the OAA; research and evaluation under the OAA; and a technical assistance center for state agencies on aging. We are specifically writing to request:

- Additional funding for Title III-D of the OAA;
- No less than \$50 million for the ACL OAA research and evaluation center; and
- \$1 million for a State Aging Agency Technical Assistance Center.

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services in the OAA are a critical component of the aging network's ability to enhance and sustain the health and well-being of older adults. These programs include important interventions such as falls prevention, chronic disease self-management, substance-abuse screening and referrals, hypertension management, and many others. The 2020 Reauthorization of the OAA included new additions to allowable health screening activities, including immunization status and screening for malnutrition. The Act also now authorizes evidence-based health promotion programs for infectious disease and vaccine-preventable disease, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and chronic pain management. Additionally, the 2020 Reauthorization expanded III-D to include services that screen for suicide risk, social isolation, and traumatic brain injuries, as well as coordinating treatment and rehabilitation related services for issues identified by those screens.

While all of these are welcome additions that address pressing issues for older adults, these changes were included in the Reauthorization but III-D was not provided additional funding for implementation. Despite the wide range of services and supports included in the statute, III-D remains one of the smallest parts of the Act at approximately \$25 million in the FY2021 appropriations package. Given the ongoing pandemic and the devastating toll that social isolation takes on seniors, we think it is imperative that additional funding be dedicated so that states and area agencies on aging can fully implement the intent of the recent reauthorization. We strongly believe that the addition of additional focus areas should be accompanied by increased appropriations for FY2022 and beyond.

The 2020 OAA reauthorization also increased the research and evaluation capacity and responsibilities at the Administration on Community Living (ACL). Our members were very supportive of this proposal since



we believe that the true value and outcomes of OAA services are often challenging to demonstrate with the current research available. However, the proposal did not provide a dedicated source of funds for the new research center at ACL. We believe that this research should be accompanied by sufficient funding to achieve its purpose and request no less than \$50 million to establish this center in ACL.

We also wish to highlight that Congress and ACL have made significant and ongoing investments in numerous resource centers that provide critical technical assistance and training for aging network partners across the continuum. However, there is a gap in this national resource center infrastructure since there is no dedicated resource center for State Agencies on Aging. State agencies serve as the focal point of the Act in their respective states and provide key coordination, leadership, and administrative and oversight functions that are critical to the success of the aging network and its services. State agencies continue to engage in significant activities that focus on modernizing and transforming OAA services to meet the changing needs of older adults. This includes increasing person-centered services, improving the ability of aging network entities to interface with the health care system and address social determinants of health, and expanding to meet emerging needs such as technology and vaccination access. Providing comprehensive technical assistance to such a diverse group of state agencies on the wide range of issues they address on a daily basis is a significant challenge. To fill this gap, we recommend the appropriation of \$1 million in FY2022 and beyond for the creation and operation of a new national resource center dedicated to technical assistance for state agencies operating OAA programs.

We appreciate the investments that you made in FY2018 through FY2021, especially the supplemental funding to assist the network meet the needs of individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. We request that you continue to support these important programs for older adults and people with disabilities, with an emphasis on increased funding for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services, research and evaluation, and technical assistance for state aging agencies. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Adam Mosey at amosey@advancingstates.org or Damon Terzaghi at dterzaghi@advancingstates.org or 202-898-2578.

Sincerely,

Martha Roherty
Executive Director
ADvancing States

Cc: Members of the U.S. Senate
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives