



April 7, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Capitol, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Capitol, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Capitol, Room H-307
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Capitol, Room H-307
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwomen Murray and Granger, and Ranking Members Collins and DeLauro:

On behalf of our organizations that collectively represent the state agencies and Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) that serve more than 10 million older adults each year through the Older Americans Act (OAA), and multi-disciplinary professionals devoted to research, education, and practice and advancing innovation in the field of aging, we urge you to support funding for the Research, Demonstration, and Evaluation Center for the Aging Network in the FY 2024 appropriations package. The 2020 OAA reauthorization increased the research and evaluation capacity and responsibilities at the U.S. Administration on Aging at the Administration on Community Living (AoA/ACL) by creating the Research, Demonstration, and Evaluation (RDE) Center for the Aging Network. Our organizations and members were very supportive of this proposal since we believe that the true value and outcomes of the OAA are often challenging to demonstrate with the current research available. Prior to December 2022, the Center had not received any funding.

The FY 2023 omnibus provided \$5 million for the RDE Center, which is the first funding appropriated to the effort. Our members and the Aging Network were pleased to receive this additional, first-time funding. However, we are concerned that the final language of that appropriation references House Report 117-403, which contains a more restrictive interpretation of the Center's purview than Congress intended when adding the RDE Center in the 2020 OAA reauthorization. The House Report specifically focuses the Center's work on falls prevention programs alone and, while our members are strongly supportive of falls prevention efforts given their extensive work in that arena, the intent of the Center was much broader, including "research on and assessment of the relation between programs and interventions under this Act and the health outcomes, social determinants of health, quality of life, and independence of individuals served under this Act..."¹ The RDE Center was specifically designed to move away from the small, one-off research or demonstration projects that have existed for decades under OAA Title IV, which have not established at AoA/ACL the level of research function and resulting data on the efficacy of the OAA programs and services that is absolutely necessary in

¹ Section 201, Older Americans Act as amended through P.L. 116-131, enacted March 25, 2020


this day and age. The RDE Center is also intended to test innovative models that have great value for the delivery of services and other endeavors that would be determined by the Assistant Secretary on Aging in cooperation with a research director; it's important that the scope of these projects is broad and not duplicative of the work already being done in the Aging Network and under the OAA. We hope that appropriators will honor the OAA authorizers wishes in not only funding the RDE Center in FY 2024 but doing so within a broader framework that allows for research projects that are what is most needed by the Aging Network and the older adults and caregivers they serve.

Our organizations see and hear every day about the impact that OAA programs have for older adults as our members create those successes. We also believe that the OAA could benefit from a more robust research base, that would help demonstrate the actual outcomes of services, identify return on investment for state and federal dollars, and lead to program improvement and efficiencies.

Therefore, we urge Congress to include in the FY 2024 appropriations package total funding of no less than \$10 million for the Center and to include language expanding the scope of the Center to align with the 2020 reauthorization.

We appreciate the significant investments that you have made in the Older Americans Act and look forward to working with you to continue the work of funding the Center. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Adam Mosey of ADvancing States at amosey@advancingstates.org or Amy Gotwals of USAging at agotwals@usaging.org or Trish D'Antonio at pdantonio@geron.org of the Gerontological Society of America.

Sincerely,



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