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## Joint Statement from ADVancing States, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), Meals on Wheels America, the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP), and the National Council on Aging (NCOA) Supporting Emergency OAA Funding Included in the Next COVID-19 Relief Bill

On behalf of our organizations that collectively represent the state agencies, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and local senior nutrition programs, senior centers and other aging services providers serving more than 10 million older adults each year through the Older Americans Act (OAA), we enthusiastically support the emergency funding allocation for OAA programs included in the House Education and Labor Committee's portion of the FY 2021 budget reconciliation bill.

We urge lawmakers to advance this essential—and desperately needed—funding and ensure that OAA programs, which include home-delivered meals, in-home services, caregiver assistance, and other home and community-based supportive services, can continue to meet the dramatically increased needs of older Americans and caregivers during the ongoing health and economic crisis resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

Our organizations have advocated for—and fully support—the Committee-proposed \$1.44 billion in emergency supplemental funding for OAA programs. This funding is essential to continue meeting the unique services needs of older Americans and family caregivers living in the community, particularly those living in poverty, older adults of color, and other populations with greatest social and economic need, which Congress has identified in the OAA. These needs have drastically increased due to the COVID crisis, which has hit these populations the hardest. Given these needs, we urge lawmakers to ensure that a final emergency supplemental funding package incorporates the Education and Labor Committee's allocations for OAA programs and services including:

- \$750 million for Congregate and Home-Delivered Nutrition Services (Title III-C)
- \$25 million for Native American Nutrition, Supportive and Caregiver Services (Title VI)
- \$480 million for Supportive Services (Title III-B), which will be used for existing services, to support and facilitate vaccinations for older adults, and activities to mitigate the risks of prolonged social isolation and loneliness among older adults
- \$44 million for Evidence-Based Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Title III-D)
- \$145 million for Caregiver Services (Title III-E)

As proposed by the House Education and Labor Committee, this funding will also help to expand the vital role the Aging Network is already serving, and will continue to serve, in vaccine outreach, support and facilitation. These activities to facilitate vaccination include deploying the Aging Network's existing and trusted Information and Referral systems to engage with older adults and caregivers about vaccine availability, processes for scheduling, and eligibility for different populations; and providing wrap-around services—such as case management and transportation to appointments—that ensure vaccinations are completed for high-risk and hard-to-reach older populations. Additionally, this funding will support the Network in responding to the widespread and worsening epidemic of social isolation and loneliness among older adults due to prolonged stay-at-home recommendations during the pandemic.

Again, we applaud House Education and Labor Committee leaders for including vital emergency funding for Older Americans Act programs and services in their budget reconciliation proposal, and we urge Congress to ensure that these investments are included in the next round of COVID-19 relief legislation. Without additional investments, the vulnerable older Americans we are serving will suffer deeply and unnecessarily. This is an important opportunity to ensure that cost-effective investments are made in community-based services targeted toward meeting the needs of the highest risk Americans throughout the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

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