



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Debra B. Whitman, Chair

October 28, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Foxx,

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of 69 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's seniors and committed to representing their interests in the policy-making arena.

We write to you today in strong support of H.R. 4334, the Dignity in Aging Act, and urge its passage by the House of Representatives. We thank the House Committee on Education and Labor for its efforts to develop and negotiate this bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) and commend Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Susie Lee (D-NV), James Comer (R-KY), Susan Wild (D-PA), and Dusty Johnson (R-SD) for their leadership and introduction.

The current authorization of the Act expired on September 30, 2019 and prompt action by the House is needed to ensure the sustainability of OAA programs, as well as the health, dignity, and independence of the older Americans and their caregivers who depend on these programs. A bipartisan reauthorization of the OAA that reaffirms and protects its mission remains a top priority for LCAO.

The OAA is essential to developing, coordinating, and delivering home and community-based services that help older adults age with independence and dignity in their homes and communities. Many individuals served by OAA-funded programs are at significant risk of hunger, isolation, and losing their ability to live with health and independence. OAA-supported programs that deliver to more than 11 million seniors and their caregivers annually include home-delivered and congregate nutrition services, in-home supportive services, transportation, caregiver support, disease prevention and health promotion, community service employment, the long-term care ombudsman program, services to prevent the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults, and other supportive services.

By keeping seniors healthy and in their communities for over 50 years, OAA programs have delayed or prevented the need for more expensive institutional care, such as that paid for through Medicare or Medicaid, effectively saving taxpayer, state, and federal dollars. In addition to helping seniors age in place, OAA programs have improved our country's fiscal future and promoted efficiencies within the



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health care system by preventing unnecessary hospital stays, reducing readmission rates, coordinating care, and managing care transitions.

The Dignity in Aging Act incorporates the majority of reauthorization priorities articulated by LCAO, and many of the additional recommendations of our colleagues. Most importantly, the bill calls for much-needed and necessary investments in the OAA by increasing authorizations over the next five years – the top priority of our coalition and the most critical need of the Aging Services Network. Other LCAO priority areas addressed by H.R. 4334 include innovation and demonstrations, Native American services, local planning and development, supports for those suffering from dementias and social isolation, legal services, and family caregiver supports.

Most importantly, the legislation preserves the numerous ways in which this Act works so well at the federal, state, and local levels, on behalf of the older adults and caregivers for whom it is a lifeline to dignity, independence, health, safety, and economic security.

LCAO has played a significant leadership role in past reauthorizations, and we now stand in strong support of this critical bill. We urge its bipartisan passage in the House and remain ready to work with you to build upon the successes of the OAA.

Sincerely,

Debra B. Whitman, PhD
Chair, LCAO

cc: Members of the United States House of Representatives