



January 27, 2020

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of our organizations that collectively represent the state agencies, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and local senior nutrition providers serving more than 10 million older adults each year through the Older Americans Act (OAA), **we urge that at least \$1.364 billion in funding for OAA programs be included in the next coronavirus emergency supplemental bill.**

We thank you for your prior support of emergency funding for OAA programs, which include home-delivered meals, in-home services, caregiver assistance, and other community-based supportive services. But, given the extended duration and magnitude of this public health crisis and the vastly increased caseload of our members as a result, **additional funding is necessary and required to enable those older adults most at-risk of COVID-19 and in greatest need to continue receiving services.**

Despite bipartisan [Senate](#) and [House](#) support for additional investments in OAA programs—and the enormous ongoing need for OAA services in nearly every community—we are concerned and disappointed that lawmakers have not responded in more ways to meet the needs of the population at the greatest risk of hospitalization and death from the virus. Of the more than 400,000 Americans sacrificed to COVID-19, 80 percent were 65 or older. Sixty percent were 75 or older. Furthermore, older Americans who contract the coronavirus have a five to 13 times higher risk of hospitalization and a 90 to 630 times higher risk of death than younger adults.ⁱ

Simply, older Americans have borne the brunt of the most tragic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, and it is incumbent upon federal leaders to ensure that adequate—and ultimately cost-effective and high-return—investments in vital discretionary home and community-based services are made. While we appreciate that Congress included \$175 million for OAA nutrition services in the end of the year omnibus spending package, that amount fell far

short not only of the need within the OAA nutrition subtitle, but also of the strong bicameral, bipartisan support for additional funding for other OAA titles.

As such, we request that of the nearly \$2 trillion in additional relief funds proposed by the Biden Administration and being negotiated into legislation, Congressional leaders provide—at a minimum—**an additional \$1.364 billion in funding for Older Americans Act programs. Without a new infusion of emergency funding, we will face a services cliff, with large numbers of older adults and caregivers losing the help they need to stay safe and well at home and in the community.**

To respond to the unique needs of older Americans living in the community, particularly those living in poverty and older adults of color, the following emergency funds are critically important:

- \$1.364 billion for Older Americans Act programs provided by the Administration for Community Living (ACL):
 - \$750 million for Congregate and Home-Delivered Nutrition Services (Title III-C)
 - \$20 million for Native American Nutrition Services (Title VI)
 - \$400 million for Supportive Services (Title III-B), including \$200 million for existing services and an additional \$200 million for vaccination outreach to and support for hard-to-reach older adults
 - \$44 million for Evidence-Based Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Title III-D)
 - \$150 million for Caregiver Services (Title III-E)

Additionally, our ask for OAA III-B Supportive Services reflects the role the Aging Network is already serving and will continue to engage in during vaccine deployment. As trusted resources of state and local information and help, the Aging Network is providing education and outreach as well as answering questions through its Information and Referral systems regarding vaccine availability, processes for scheduling and eligibility for different populations. Equally important is the support that the network can offer to older adults that allows them to secure a vaccination.

In many areas, the predominant method for scheduling a vaccination is an online process that requires both an internet connection and familiarity with technology, which can sometimes be difficult for older adults. As such, state health departments across the country are already relying on the Aging Network to serve a vital role in scheduling vaccine appointments and securing transportation to and from those appointments, as well as providing ongoing case management to ensure that the person actually receives the inoculation. However, with no additional resources available for this work, it will be impossible for the Aging Network to provide these critical wrap-around services at the level needed to achieve widespread vaccination among all older adults—especially those that are high-risk and hard to reach.

The Aging Network is at a critical juncture, and without additional investments the high-risk older Americans we are serving will suffer unnecessarily. The Congressional support for additional OAA funding is bipartisan and bicameral. We implore lawmakers to seize the opportunity in the next relief package to ensure that cost-effective investments are made in community-based services targeted toward meeting the needs of vulnerable older Americans. Our recommendations reflect the urgent situation on the ground in communities across the country. Accordingly, we urge their adoption before it is too late and older adults lose access to this essential assistance. We and our thousands of members stand ready to assist you however we can. Please reach out if we can provide additional information or resources.

Sincerely,



Martha Roherty, Executive Director
ADvancing States

Contact Information:

241 18th Street South, Suite 403
Arlington, VA 22202
202-898-2578 | <http://www.advancingstates.org>



Ellie Hollander, President and CEO
Meals on Wheels America

Contact Information:

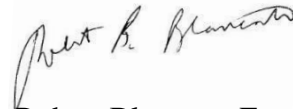
1550 Crystal Drive, Suite 1004
Arlington, VA 22202
571-339-1622 |
www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org



Sandy Markwood, CEO
National Association of Area Agencies
on Aging (n4a)

Contact Information:

1100 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Suite
350
Washington, DC 20003
202-872-0888 | www.n4a.org



Robert Blacato, Executive Director
National Association of Nutrition and
Aging and Services Programs

Contact Information:

1612 K Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006
202-682-6899 | www.nanasp.org

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

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html#footnote01>