



August 3, 2020

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

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

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer 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 you to continue negotiations toward achieving a bipartisan, bicameral coronavirus relief proposal that provides continued emergency funding for OAA programs. These vital services, such as home-delivered meals, in-home services, caregiver assistance, and other community-based supportive services, have been instrumental in supporting older adults at home during this ongoing health crisis that has been especially risky for older Americans.

We appreciate that the Families First Coronavirus Response and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Acts—implemented more than four months ago during the very early days of the pandemic—provided more than \$1 billion in emergency appropriations for OAA programs to ensure that our collective membership could address the increasing and unique economic, social and nutritional needs of our nation’s most vulnerable older adults. However, we increasingly hear concerns from states and communities across the country that those emergency supplemental funds are nearing depletion while the need and associated costs are going in the other direction.

For example, the state of Florida reported that they went from providing about 45,000 meals a day to 190,000 meals a day due to the pandemic. A number of states, including Connecticut, Florida, Missouri, Massachusetts, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, South Carolina, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming have reported that they are likely to exhaust all of the FFCRA and CARES Act nutrition funding by the end of this calendar year. Several other states report budgeting in order to extend funding through FY2021; however, this has often involved providing fewer services than necessary to fully meet the increased demand. **We urge you to, at a minimum, provide at least an**

**additional \$1.1 billion in funding for OAA programs in the next coronavirus emergency supplemental funding bill** to support older Americans in their homes and communities where they are safest from the devastating consequences of COVID-19.

As we have collectively witnessed the duration and magnitude of this pandemic, and the vastly increased caseload of our members as a result, additional funding is absolutely necessary. For example, in a [recent survey report](#) released by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), more than 90 percent of AAAs are serving more clients since the pandemic began and nearly 70 percent are providing more extensive services to existing clients.<sup>1</sup> Meals on Wheels America members are serving an average of 77 percent more meals to 47 percent more seniors since March 1, with virtually all programs having seen the cost of providing services increase.<sup>2</sup> **At the very least, as this crisis continues, we request that lawmakers provide ongoing emergency funding for Older Americans Act programs and services that reflects the combined total of OAA funding provided in the Families First and CARES Acts.**

Since we sent our [initial request letter](#) to congressional leadership on July 2, the nationwide health and economic situation has only deteriorated, increasing the urgency for community-based organizations and aging services providers to continue to respond to expanding needs. In the five months since COVID-19 began ravaging the country, our members have transitioned from a rapid-response mode adapting service models—such as congregate meal programs to “grab-and-go” distribution centers—to exploring opportunities to sustain new services innovations to prevent hunger, expand the availability of home-delivered meals, maintain telephone reassurance lines to keep seniors less isolated and more connected—and much, much more. But with these local innovations and expanded services, it is clear that supplemental support is necessary to ensure that America’s older adults can remain living safely and independently in their homes and communities.

Furthermore, the pandemic’s persistence continues to exacerbate the very real health risk of prolonged social isolation among older Americans. We urge lawmakers to include additional funding for technological solutions to address the health implications of social isolation and loneliness that we [outlined in our July letter](#) to leadership.

**We also strongly support robust supplementary relief to state and local governments—**including additional federal Medicaid and Medicaid home and community-based (HCBS) waiver matching funds to states—which have been tested by unprecedented need even as state revenues plummet. **Absent significant relief from Congress, we fear that states and localities will be forced to make deep cuts to OAA programs, as well as other state-funded efforts to support older adults.** The cost of inaction and disinvestment in all of these vital aging programs will be far greater than the ongoing investments in another COVID-19 relief package. The impact of hunger, malnutrition and loneliness on older adults will cause otherwise avoidable hospitalizations and premature nursing home placements, increasing health care costs and unnecessary suffering.

**We are grateful for the bipartisan support for older Americans that you provided in the early days of this crisis, and implore you to build on these successes to ensure that the next emergency package reflects our recommendations for continued and significant funding increases for these vital community aging services and supports and the millions of older adults**

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), #AAAsAtWork for Older Adults, July 2020, [https://www.n4a.org/Files/n4a\\_MemberSurveyReport2020\\_Web\\_07July2020.pdf](https://www.n4a.org/Files/n4a_MemberSurveyReport2020_Web_07July2020.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Meals on Wheels America, July 2020 COVID-19 Impact Pulse Survey, pending publication by August 7, 2020

**in need who depend on them.** As always, we and our members stand ready to assist you however we can, so please reach out if we can provide additional information or resources.

Sincerely,



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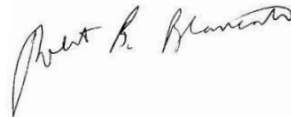
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cc: House Committee on Appropriations  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
House Committee on Education and Labor  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions