United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4504

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 136
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
Hart Senate Office Building, Room 125
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you consider the Subcommittee's funding priorities for Fiscal Year 2023, we urge you to increase funding for programs authorized under the Older Americans Act (OAA). Your past support for OAA programs has been critical in providing vital assistance for millions of older Americans. With the historic aging of our nation's population and the surge in demand for services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased funding for OAA programs is particularly important now and in the years to come. To meet this need, we request $4.33 billion in funding for the OAA in Fiscal Year 2023.

As you know, the OAA is the major federal vehicle for the delivery of social and nutrition services for more than 11 million older Americans. These programs include congregate nutrition services, home-delivered nutrition services (i.e., "Meals on Wheels"), supportive and transportation services, activities to promote socialization and wellness at senior centers, employment and community service through the Senior Community Service Employment Program, vulnerable elder rights protection, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, and family caregiver support.

The demand for these programs has grown significantly over the past year and remains great. In fact, in many areas of the country, vulnerable seniors are on waiting lists for services that they desperately need. Meanwhile, the cost of living – particularly for food, medication, and housing – continues to increase for seniors. Moreover, the demand is only expected to increase. Today, there are more than 73 million Americans aged 60 years and older, the largest cohort of seniors in American history. The U.S. Census projects that these trends will continue for the next few decades, and by 2050, the number of Americans aged 60 years and older will increase to more than 108 million.

Investing in OAA services saves taxpayer dollars by reducing premature and costly Medicare and Medicaid expenditures resulting from unnecessary nursing home placement or

hospitalizations due to poor nutrition and chronic health conditions. There are few better investments than the OAA programs that millions of older adults rely on for a healthy and dignified life. Regretfully, federal funding for OAA programs has failed to keep pace with inflation and the growing need, despite the cost-effectiveness and significant return on investment of these critical programs.

Over the past two years, supportive and nutrition services funded by the OAA have only become more critical to keeping older adults healthy and in their homes. For instance, as congregate meal sites closed and service providers shifted to entirely home-delivered meals due to the pandemic, it became even clearer how much of a lifeline these services are to some older adults who would not otherwise have access to nutritious foods or social interaction. Moreover, older adult services providers report that even as pandemic restrictions ease, the demand for nutrition, supportive, and caregiving services has not, and has actually increased in many areas. Total OAA funding of $4.33 billion would not only recognize the growth in demand for services, but also the increased cost of services over the past several years.

We realize you face very difficult fiscal constraints. However, we ask that you consider the value and need for OAA services, and fund these programs at the highest possible levels.

We greatly appreciate your consideration, and we look forward to working with you to ensure a sustained investment in OAA services and programs.

Sincerely,

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Mark Kelly
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator