United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you consider the Subcommittee's funding priorities for Fiscal Year 2016, we urge you to increase funding by at least 12 percent above FY 2015 levels 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, increased funding for OAA programs is particularly important now and in the years to come.

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

The demand for these programs is great, and in many areas of the country, vulnerable seniors are on waiting lists for services that they desperately need. Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to increase for seniors, particularly for food, medication, fuel, and housing. Moreover, the demand is only expected to increase. Today, there are more than 65 million Americans over the age of 60, with 10,000 baby boomers turning 65 every day. The U.S. Census projects that these trends will continue for the next few decades, and by 2030, the number of Americans age 60 and over will increase to 92 million.

Regretfully, federal funding for OAA programs has failed to keep pace with inflation or the growing need, despite the cost-effectiveness of these critical programs. There are few better investments than the OAA programs that millions of older adults rely on for a healthy and dignified life. 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.

At a minimum, a 12 percent increase – $225 million – over FY 2015 spending levels would recognize the increased costs of services over the past decade. A 12 percent increase, though

insufficient to address the significant growth in the senior population, would be an important step toward meeting existing demand.
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

RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator

SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator

TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator

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