



December 3, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman
The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chair
The Honorable Bobby Scott, Ranking Member
House Education and Workforce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Cassidy, Chair Foxx and Ranking Member Scott:

Legislation to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) offers a straightforward opportunity to help ease concerns about inflation and isolation expressed by a sizable and politically crucial block of voters in this year's election. Passing such a bill before the 118th Congress adjourns would demonstrate clearly that lawmakers are paying attention to what their constituents say they want from Congress: Common-sense bipartisan solutions that ease the economic anxieties of everyday Americans.

Fortunately, a reauthorization making critical updates to the law (S 4776) is awaiting a vote by the Senate. The legislation, AS AMENDED, reflects the result of negotiations between members, from both parties, of the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over the OAA. And so we urge the Senate to pass and the House to clear this measure.

First enacted in 1965, the OAA enables people 60 and older to continue contributing to their communities, while living safely and comfortably at home. Its programs provide supportive services including transportation, personal and home care, falls prevention and other preventive health care, family caregiver help, and community service opportunities, as well as meals delivered both to individual homes and in senior centers, housing complexes, adult day centers, schools, and churches. Other programs help prevent physical and financial abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older people and provide ombudsman services for those in long-term care facilities.

Discretionary funding for these programs – \$2.4 billion was appropriated in fiscal 2024 – is delivered through Agencies on Aging in every state and territory to 618 Area Agencies on Aging and 282 tribal support organizations – and ultimately to almost 20,000 service providers nationwide, even in the most rural and remote communities. The Administration for Community Living (ACL), an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, oversees most OAA programs.



The law's most recent reauthorization, which President Trump signed in 2020, lapsed Sept. 30. As organizations representing a broad array of funders of health and social services programs, Grantmakers In Health and Grantmakers In Aging are collaborating to promote reauthorization because hundreds of our members, through the aging services network created by the OAA, are partnering with the government to help older Americans enjoy greater health, independence, and social connection.

These public-private partnerships have been significantly boosting the total spent on programs, fostering innovation, and enhancing flexibility. In fact, the ACL estimates that every \$1 in federal spending on OAA services and programs leverages at least \$3 and as much as \$4 in other funding. And yet these partnerships are not meeting demand. Twelve million older Americans worry about having enough food to eat, nearly a quarter are socially isolated, and nearly 95 percent have a chronic health condition. That is why the OAA needs to be extended and strengthened.

The constituency for the OAA's programs was at the center of the 2024 election – both in its demographics and in its voting behavior. One in six people who cast a ballot (27.5 million) was 65 or older, and the national exit poll showed the two major presidential candidates each got 49 percent of their vote. At least as important, almost one in six voters (24.5 million) have annual income between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

These people (who favored the incoming president by eight percentage points) are precisely the group the OAA is likeliest to help. Most are members of the so-called Forgotten Middle. That name, coined in a landmark 2019 study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, refers to older adults who have too much income to be eligible for Medicaid, but not enough income to afford the sorts of long-term services and support the OAA provides.

This bill has strong bipartisan support, reflects the power of public-private partnerships, and would make life better for millions of middle-income older Americans concerned the government is not doing enough to make their lives more affordable. As funders, we see services for older adults as an investment, not an expense, preventing greater and more costly medical needs and stimulating economic growth. We urge Congress to send President Biden the negotiated version of S 4776 without delay. Please consider us a resource representing the philanthropic sector, as you move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsay A. Goldman".

[Lindsay A. Goldman](#)

CEO, Grantmakers In Aging

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cara V. James".

[Cara V. James](#)

President and CEO, Grantmakers In Health