



February 10, 2021 Legislative Update

House Committee Advances OAA Emergency Funding Recommends \$1.444 billion for Older Americans Act!

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In a major victory for aging advocates, the House Education and Labor Committee passed, in the small hours of this morning, a COVID relief proposal that includes \$1.444 billion in emergency funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and services delivered under Title III B, C, D and E and Title VI. After debating amendments since Tuesday afternoon, the Committee voted along party lines for the overall measure, 27 to 21.

All of n4a's [top COVID-relief requests for OAA](#) are included in this measure, a testament to the [excellent advocacy n4a members conducted in their communities around this ask](#). But lots more advocacy work needs to be done to get to the finish line. As the final bill moves through the House and Senate, many steps remain before these critical provisions can become a reality.

The Details

The House Education/Labor measure includes n4a's top asks for OAA (see our [January 29 letter to Congress](#)), and reflect the coordinated advocacy conducted in partnership with our advocacy partners ([January 27 letter on OAA and vaccines](#); [February 2 sign-on letter on III B ask on vaccines](#)) in the Aging Network and beyond. The funding included is designed to replenish extinguished CARES funds, so that dangerous service cliffs can be avoided or, in cases where funding has already lapsed, service gaps restored amidst the ongoing pandemic.

This funding, like CARES and the [December 2020 emergency nutrition funding](#), is intended to address needs that have risen during the COVID-19 pandemic and is in addition to the regular FY 2021 funding that Congress finalized at the end of the year. The House committee provisions include the following OAA funding levels.

- \$470 million for Supportive Services (Title III B), which will be used for continuing traditional III B services, supporting and facilitating vaccinations for older adults, and additional activities to mitigate the risks of prolonged social isolation and loneliness among older adults
- \$750 million for Congregate and Home-Delivered Nutrition Services (Title III C)
- \$25 million for Native American Nutrition, Supportive and Caregiver Services (Title VI, Parts A and C)
- \$44 million for Evidence-Based Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Title III D)
- \$145 million for National Family Caregiver Support Program (Title III E)
- \$10 million for Title VII Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program



The \$470 million for OAA Title III B is a noteworthy victory, as it reflects n4a's efforts to not only replace the \$200 million in CARES Act funding for III B but to double the amount in recognition of AAAs' critical roles in helping older adults get vaccinated around the country. The further \$70 million in III B closely reflects n4a's previous request in mid-2020 for AAAs to address the increased incidence of social isolation and loneliness, which was also part of a bill led by Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) and Rep. David Trone (D-MD). If this recommendation survives the process ahead and is passed into law, it will be a tremendous win for n4a's years-long advocacy to earn policymakers' increased support for this most flexible pool of funding within OAA that has too often been overshadowed by the more well-known nutrition programs.

The Process

While OAA and other discretionary programs are usually not directly funded by the authorization committees like Education/Labor and HELP, but rather by the appropriations committees, the process being used by Democrats in Congress to pass this particular COVID-relief bill is quite different.

In order to allow the final measure to pass the Senate with only 51 votes—which means Democrats only need to hold their own members if they cannot win any Republican votes for the package—the relief bill will move via a budget process called reconciliation. Since the Senate filibuster rules do not apply to reconciliation bills, lawmakers need only draw 51 votes, instead of the 60 votes that are, in practical effect, usually needed to advance a bill to a final vote. While the final package could draw Republican support, Democrats are using reconciliation rules to build out their nearly \$2 trillion bill.

Next Steps

The provisions passed by the House Education and Labor Committee today will be merged with similar COVID relief provisions from other House committees, so a House floor vote is still ahead. And advocacy will be required to ensure that the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee follows their House counterpart's lead and provides the same robust levels of essential OAA funding in their bill. As in 2020, n4a is working with congressional OAA champions and other advocates to advance this. Stay tuned for next steps for advocates!

Meanwhile, **make sure you have the [2021 Virtual n4a Aging Policy and Advocacy Summit on your calendars for April 27-29](#)**. Registration will open in the next month.

The online-only event will be the perfect opportunity to both engage your staff and advisory committees in advocacy efforts and to learn the latest health and aging policy news coming out of a new Administration and Congress. We hope the silver lining of having to go virtual in 2021 will be that more of our members and their stakeholders can partake in this important policy and advocacy conversation!