



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Department on Aging

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February 8, 2021

Hon. Ron Johnson
United States Senator
SH-328
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnson,

We need your immediate support to ensure that **additional emergency funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and aid to local governments** is included in any new COVID-19 relief package. Sadly, the programs designed by Congress to protect, support and engage older adults in the community have been largely ignored by Congress in past COVID-19 relief packages. Yes, every statistical report bears out the beleaguering fact that older adults have borne the brunt of this pandemic – physically, emotionally, and economically.

Providing trillions of dollars in federal relief *without* increasing funding for the very programs, supports, and services that older adults rely upon at a local level is both imprudent and unhelpful to those experiencing the greatest trauma from this pandemic. Older Americans Act funding is directed to help the most vulnerable in our communities through trusted local providers.

On behalf of the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging, which represents the interests of more than 185,000 older adults, we implore you to include additional funding for all Older Americans Act Titles in the COVID-19 relief package now under consideration.

These funds would provide nutritional support to seniors, meal delivery, transportation, legal services – including eviction prevention – caregiver support, wellness calls, virtual programming to combat isolation, elder abuse prevention and intervention, and home and community based long term supports and services.

Failure to include funding for OAA services in another bill responding to COVID-19 will result in a lost opportunity to stave off the worst effects of the pandemic on older Americans. We urge you to include, at a minimum, an additional **\$1.364 billion for the Older Americans Act** in the next relief package. Without these investments in the local response to the pandemic, more older adults and their caretakers will needlessly die or be left behind.

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Specifically, we urge you to invest in the following for Older Americans Act programs administered by the Administration for Community Living (ACL):

- \$750 million for Congregate and Home-Delivered Nutrition (Title III C)
- \$400 million for Supportive Services (Title III B) including \$200 million for vaccination outreach and support to hard-to-reach older adults;
- \$20 million for Native American Aging Programs (Title VI);
- \$44 million for Evidence-Based Health Promotion (Title III D); and
- \$150 million for Family Caregiver Support (Title III E).

Importantly, as part of this emergency funding, we urge Congress to boost federal investments in Older Americans Act **III B Supportive Services** to provide the wrap-around services that will greatly aid our national efforts to **vaccinate older adults and family caregivers**.

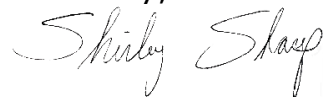
The Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging can provide education on the importance of vaccination, help older adults navigate complicated vaccine sign-up systems most of which are online, and provide direct support services to help older adults keep vaccination appointments (transportation, personal assistance, case management). These efforts enhance existing and future vaccine deployment efforts by state and local public health agencies, but to do this, the aging network will require additional federal resources.

Thus, we are also seeking Congress' inclusion of local government support, including an additional \$350 billion in critical aid to **state, local and territorial governments** and an additional \$2.7 billion in funding to support **Aging and Disability Resource Centers** and long-term care.

Finally, transportation investment is critical to ensure that older adults and their caretakers can get to vaccinations, treatment, and continue to ensure the viability of transit systems. We urge an additional **\$50 million investment in the 5310 specialized transportation program**.

Collectively, we have the opportunity to turn around our nation's COVID-19 efforts and provide a unified response that meets the moment and the need. Yet, without further support for vital community-based programs, older adults will endure unnecessary, preventable suffering. We implore lawmakers to prioritize older adults by including funding for these vital aging programs in the next relief legislation.

Sincerely,



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