

2021 POLICY BRIEF



Fully Fund the Older Americans Act (OAA)

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress, especially those who serve on the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Appropriations Committees, to appropriate Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) programs at or above the level of \$2.46 billion as authorized in the *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020* (SOAA, P.L. 116-131).

BACKGROUND:

Originally enacted in 1965, the Older Americans Act (OAA) supports activities that help older adults live independently and remain part of the community. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging (AOA) under the Administration for Community Living (ACL) administers most OAA programs. Only those promoting part-time employment opportunities and community service activities for seniors fall separately under the Department of Labor.

The majority of OAA programs are “core services” authorized by Title III—Grants for State and Community Programs on Aging. These core services vary depending on local needs, but often include transportation, nutrition, support for caregivers, recreation, in-home assistance, disease prevention and more. The OAA also authorizes funding for training, research and demonstration projects in the field of aging as well as grants for services for Native Americans and elder rights activities.

States receive Title III Grants according to a formula based on their share of the nation's population of individuals 60 and older. States then pass these funds to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), which coordinate programs and services for senior citizens at the local level. Counties are key recipients of these dollars and frequent administrators of these programs. Roughly 25 percent of the 625 AAAs across the nation operate within county governments, while another 28 percent operate within regional planning councils or councils of governments that often include counties. Meanwhile, 56 percent of AAAs rely on local funding streams through counties or other local governments to provide additional programs and services.

As the nation's population rapidly ages, counties face increasing demand and challenges in providing comprehensive systems of

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Between 2011 and 2030, 78 million individuals who were born between 1946 and 1964 will reach the age of 65. This means the number of older adults in the U.S. will more than double, thereby increasing the demand on OAA services

Federal funding for OAA programs has not kept pace with these demographic changes. In fact, regular OAA funding was \$230 million less in FY 2020 than in FY 2010.



care to their older residents. Federal funding for OAA programs has not kept pace with these demographic changes. Without additional resources, counties will face new challenges in providing the rapidly aging population with access to critical services.

The Supporting Older Americans Act not only reauthorized the OAA for 5 years but provided a critical increase in the authorized funding level for core services: 7 percent in the first year (FY 2020) and 6 percent annually for the next four years, FY 2021 through FY 2024. However, programs under OAA are discretionary and subject to the annual appropriations process, meaning Congress may not provide the full increase allowed for in the reauthorization.

COVID-19: The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent relief packages led to a large emergency increase in funding for Older American Act programs. The *Family First Coronavirus Relief Act* (FFCRA) provided \$80 million for Congregate Nutrition Services and \$160 million for Home-Delivered Nutrition Services. ACL released this funding in March 2020. The *CARES Act* provided \$900 million for programs that serve seniors and individuals through the Older Americans Act (OAA). This funding was released in April 2020 and includes \$200 million for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), \$480 million for home-delivered meals for older adults and supplements many other programs. The *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021* included \$175 million in emergency funding for senior nutrition programs and \$100 million in emergency funding for ACL to address abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly.

KEY TALKING POINTS

Between 2011 and 2030, 78 million individuals who were born between 1946 and 1964 will reach the age of 65. This means the number of older adults in the U.S. will more than double, thereby increasing the demand on OAA services.

Approximately 25 percent of the 625 area agencies on aging across the nation operate within county governments while another 28 percent operate within regional planning councils or councils of governments that often include counties.

56 percent of area agencies on aging rely on local funding streams – including from counties – to provide additional programs and services.

Congress should appropriate FY 2022 funding for Older Americans Act programs at or above the level of \$2.46 billion as authorized in the recently passed Supporting Older Americans Act.

Congress should provide full funding for the OAA in future appropriations so that it can keep pace with our nation's growing population of older adults.

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