



October 2, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Democratic Leader
322 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Robin Vos
Assembly Speaker
Wisconsin
President, NCSL

Martha R. Wigton
Director
House Budget & Research
Office
Georgia
Staff Chair, NCSL

Tim Storey
Executive Director

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer and Representatives Pelosi and McCarthy,

As you work with your colleagues to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA), we want to take this opportunity to share with you the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) policy priorities for OAA. These priorities, which are summarized below, highlight the flexibilities states need from our federal partners when providing services for older Americans. The full policy document can be [read here](#).

Summary of NCSL's Older Americans Act (OAA) Policy

NCSL urges Congress to support:

- Preserving the financial integrity of the Social Security system,
- Eliminating all forms of age discrimination against older workers,
- Providing funds for direct services for the elderly,
- Funding the development of integrated, coordinated, community-based continued care systems to help prevent the unnecessary institutionalization of the elderly,
- Providing additional support for gerontological research, education and training, and
- Ensuring flexibility for states to use TANF funds to support programs that serve grandparents raising grandchildren.

Specific to OAA and its programs, the services must be cost effective and responsive to the special needs of the elderly. NCSL appreciates the support of Congress and the administration for OAA and the National Family Caregiver Support Program. The National Family Caregiver Support program and the states running this program must be provided the flexibility to establish program standards and the ability to decide how program funds will be distributed.

Also, NCSL supports increased efforts in the reauthorization of OAA to ensure its programs reach low-income, minority and rural elderly households, and to inform these groups about services available under the OAA and other relevant programs.

Additionally, the authority of state governments through designated state Units on Aging should be strengthened to ensure that service funds under the OAA are used to support independence in older populations and to the most vulnerable members of this population—the very old, the frail, the isolated and limited English-speaking individuals—with particular attention to low-income minority persons.

NCSL also supports states being able to transfer funds between programs. Examples include between the nutrition program and the social services program. More specifically including congregate and home delivered meals per states' need.

States should also continue to be able to determine if and what services Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) directly provide, which will strengthen the capacity and resources of State Units on Aging and AAA. This is critical to a wide range of elder rights issues including: quality of long-term care, elder abuse, consumer protection, guardianship, age discrimination and beneficiary rights in entitlement programs.

NCSL also supports congressional proposals to provide states and national contractors more flexibility on administrative costs while keeping these costs to a minimum.

NCSL encourages Congress to authorize this program in a timely manner and ensure that any reauthorization provides the flexibility states need in providing OAA services to their constituents. For more information, please contact NCSL staff: Haley Nicholson (haley.nicholson@ncsl.org) at 202-624-8662 or Margaret Wile (margaret.wile@ncsl.org) at 202-624-3558.

Sincerely,



Tim Storey
Executive Director
National Conference of State Legislatures