

Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024

Providing Aging Americans the Support to Live Independently and with Dignity

Background

The *Older Americans Act* (OAA) was first passed in 1965, alongside Medicare, Medicaid, and landmark civil rights laws, as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society initiative. OAA authorizes funds to state and local programs to ensure aging seniors have adequate access to food, transportation, and other basic services they need to live independently and with dignity. OAA was last reauthorized through the *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020*, led by Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR).

The Problem

OAA currently helps over 11 million Americans aged 60 and over every year and over 11 million older adults and their caregivers. The law funds a wide range of popular programs and services that millions of seniors rely upon every day, including Meals on Wheels, transportation services, and part-time job opportunities to support financial security and combat social isolation. For many older individuals, OAA programs are vital to their health, wellbeing, and independence. Further, the law provides vital support to caregivers.

However, as the population of Americans aged 60 and over has grown, funding for OAA is not keeping pace. Robust investments are needed to ensure that seniors and their caregivers are supported.

The Solution

The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* is a bipartisan update to OAA to ensure that the law can respond to the challenges facing a growing generation of aging Americans.

- **Maintains the Strong OAA Programs and Standards**

The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* protects the existing OAA-authorized programs and services that are effectively responding to the needs of seniors and caregivers so they can continue to support communities across the country. The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* provides important updates to ensure that the Aging Network is provided with the support and technical assistance they need to continue to provide high-quality services efficiently and effectively.

- **Strengthens the Aging Network to Meet the Needs of Older Individuals**

The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* improves coordination among programs in the aging network and improves the network's capacity to meet the needs of older individuals, including individuals with disabilities and those impacted by substance use disorder.

- **Supports Caregivers**
 The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* adds peer supports for family caregivers to the National Family Caregiver Support Program and reauthorizes the *RAISE Family Caregivers Act* and the *Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act*.
- **Builds on the Administration for Community Living’s (ACL) Work to Support the Direct Care Workforce**
 The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* builds on the progress of the prior OAA reauthorization by formally codifying the national resource center within ACL to support the growth and professionalization of the direct care workforce to meet the needs of older individuals and individuals with disabilities and address training and other educational needs of family caregivers.
- **Strengthens the Services Available to Native Americans**
 The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* instructs the Assistant Secretary to carry out a previously authorized set-aside for a competitive grant program for Native Americans and establishes a Tribal Advisory Committee within OAA.
- **Focuses on Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health**
 The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* expands the Assistant Secretary for Aging’s responsibility around mental health and substance use disorder, including ensuring coordination with SAMHSA and that information around mental health and substance use disorder takes into consideration the needs of older adults.
- **Protects and Allows for Innovation in Nutrition Programs**
 The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* allows for nutrition innovation grants through codifying a 1 percent set-aside that ACL has been implementing since 2017 through appropriations language. The bill also allows for 25 percent of congregate nutrition program funding to be used for carryout (“grab ‘n’ go”) meals, in line with current regulations.
- **Improves Coordination with Disability Networks**
 The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2024* bolsters coordination between aging and disability networks including to address access to assistive technology for older adults and older adults with disabilities. Additionally, the definition of disability is revised to be consistent with the definition of disability in the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.