



601 E Street, NW | Washington, DC 20049
202-434-2277 | 1-888-OUR-AARP | 1-888-687-2277 | TTY: 1-877-434-7598
www.aarp.org | twitter: @aarp | facebook.com/aarp | youtube.com/aarp

September 17, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education & Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education & Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx:

On behalf of our nearly 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, I am writing to express AARP's support for H.R. 4334, the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019, and call for prompt reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA). We are pleased that the bill maintains the critical service and information roles of OAA programs and promotes greater responsiveness to the needs of older Americans. We appreciate your leadership and the bipartisan work of Reps. Suzanne Bonamici, Elise Stefanik, Susie Lee, James Comer, Susan Wild, and Dusty Johnson in sponsoring this legislation and look forward to continuing to work together to further strengthen the bill.

Too often, advancing age and increasing frailty threaten the ability of older Americans to live independently in their own homes and communities. The fear of having to leave family behind and enter a nursing home weighs heavily on the minds of many. According to AARP's Home and Community Preferences Survey, the vast majority of adults age 50-plus—more than three out of four people—want to remain in their community as long as possible. Giving Americans the support they need to live at home with independence and dignity has always been a bedrock goal of OAA, and it has been remarkably successful.

AARP strongly urges you to reauthorize OAA before it expires on September 30. We thank the committee for addressing our OAA priorities in the legislation, including further strengthening the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), extending the RAISE Family Caregivers Act, and increasing funding levels to support the needs of the growing older population.

For many older Americans, the key to being able to stay in their own homes is the dedication and commitment of family caregivers. An estimated 40 million family caregivers provide a

staggering \$470 billion annually in unpaid care to their loved ones—ranging from bathing and dressing to paying bills and transportation and assisting with medical/nursing tasks. By supporting family caregivers, we can help people stay at home, helping to delay or prevent more costly nursing home care and unnecessary hospitalizations.

We have concerns that the proposed change to the distribution of funding under NFCSP could have the unintended impact of directing funding away from family caregivers, and look forward to continuing to work together to help ensure adequate safeguards are in place should the funding cap within NFCSP be eliminated.

Funding

AARP is calling for funding at levels that will meet the needs of the growing older population and supports the funding levels included in H.R. 4334. Funding for OAA programs has not kept pace with inflation and increased demand. While the population of Americans who are 60 and older has increased by 63 percent since 2001, current funding for OAA is only 22 percent above the funding level in Fiscal Year 2001. When adjusted for inflation, total OAA funding over this time period has actually declined by 16 percent.

People age 80 and older are among the most likely to need help to live independently in their homes and communities. The population of Americans in this age group is projected to increase by 54 percent from 2019 to 2030. Additionally, over the next decade, the number of family caregivers is not expected to keep up with the large number of older adults needing care, underscoring the need for greater investments in OAA programs. Increased funding levels will help more older Americans and caregivers. Furthermore, increasing investments in OAA programs, such as the nutrition programs, can help more seniors to remain at home and in better health, avoiding costlier services.

National Family Caregiver Support Program – Caregiver Assessments

AARP is pleased that H.R. 4334 includes H.R. 3782, the Supporting Family Caregivers Act. This would help make sure that caregivers can get their needs assessed so that they get the services most beneficial to them and provide technical assistance to help implement the use of caregiver assessments. We appreciate the leadership of Reps. Andy Levin and Elise Stefanik on the Supporting Family Caregivers Act.

Understanding the family caregiving situation is a critical step in the process for linking the family caregiver to the most appropriate support services as every family's needs are unique. Assessments of the caregiving situation provide information to help target services more effectively and efficiently. Better targeting of support services can also help maintain the health and well-being of the caregiver, sustain their ability to provide care, produce better outcomes for their loved ones and prevent or delay nursing home placement.

RAISE Family Caregivers Act

AARP is pleased that an extension of the bipartisan Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act (P.L. 115-119) is included in H.R. 4334. We appreciate the support of committee leadership and members of the committee for a one-year RAISE extension. As the OAA reauthorization process progresses, we look forward to continuing to work with members on both sides of the aisle in the House and Senate to include a longer RAISE extension in the final enacted OAA reauthorization bill, and also language regarding the Assistant Secretary's authority to implement RAISE, such as in the draft Senate OAA bill. Providing additional time for the law's implementation would help ensure that it is effective and better able to help support the 40 million family caregivers nationwide. We believe a RAISE extension will also be helpful in ensuring continued and ongoing implementation of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act.

National Family Caregiver Support Program – Funding Cap

AARP has concerns that eliminating the NFCSP funding cap would divert resources from family caregivers. The NFCSP funding cap currently ensures that most NFCSP funding supports family caregivers as defined under NFCSP, meaning family caregivers of adults age 60-plus and family caregivers caring for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder with neurological and organic brain dysfunction. We appreciate that H.R. 4334 includes reporting language on funding and believe additional reporting language such as including distribution of funding at the planning and service area level and assessment of impact on the availability of support services would provide important information on the impact of this significant policy change.

We commend the committee for its bipartisan work in developing the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019 and encourage prompt reauthorization OAA. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Nicole Burda on our Government Affairs team at nburda@arp.org.

Sincerely,



Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs