

September 17, 2019

Mark Wilf
CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairman Robert C. Scott
House Education and Labor Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Jodi J. Schwartz
VICE CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

David T. Brown
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN CHAIR

Ranking Member Virginia Foxx
House Education and Labor Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Shelly Kupfer
CHAIR, NATIONAL WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY

Harold Gernsbacher
TREASURER

Chairwoman Suzanne Bonamici
House Education and Labor Committee
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services
Washington, DC 20515

Julie Platt
SECRETARY

David J. Butler
CHAIR, ISRAEL AND OVERSEAS

Ranking Member James R. Comer
House Education and Labor Committee
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services
Washington, DC 20515

David Golder
CHAIR, DOMESTIC POLICY & GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Rachel Hoffer
CO-CHAIR, NATIONAL YOUNG LEADERSHIP

Adam Miller
CO-CHAIR, NATIONAL YOUNG LEADERSHIP

Cynthia D. Shapira
CHAIR, UNITED ISRAEL APPEAL

Dear Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Chairwoman Bonamici and Ranking Member Comer,

Eric D. Fingerhut
PRESIDENT & CEO

William C. Daroff
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC POLICY & DIRECTOR OF THE WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) is proud to endorse the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019. JFNA represents 146 local Jewish Federations, 300 Network communities, and thousands of affiliated social service agencies across the continent. Our movement protects and enhances the well-being of Jews worldwide through the values of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), *tzedakah* (charity and social justice) and *Torah* (Jewish learning). Jewish social services provide support for more than one million vulnerable individuals each year, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, with our clients spanning the age range and including approximately 100,000 older adults.

For more than 50 years, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has been essential in developing, coordinating, and delivering home and community-based services that help older adults age with independence and dignity in their homes and communities. Without these crucial services, many individuals served by OAA-funded programs in our network are at significant risk of hunger, isolation, and losing their ability to live with health and independence. The Jewish community has proportionally older adults than the general community, with close to

1720 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

p 202.785.5900
f 202.785.4937
JewishFederations.org



25% of American Jews already over the age of 65, and the fastest growing demographic in the Jewish community is those over the age of 85. Jewish family service agencies, Jewish vocational service agencies and Jewish community centers are a key component of the country's Aging Services Network and, in a classic public-private partnership, provide many services funded through the OAA, including case management, transportation, congregate and home-delivered meals, adult day care, elder abuse prevention and intervention, family caregiver support, home care, legal conservatorship, and support groups.

This year's reauthorization process produced a bill that, if enacted, will significantly move the ball forward in how our country and its Aging Services Network treat and care for seniors. The very first provision of the Dignity in Aging Act incorporates "person-centered, trauma-informed care" as a new objective of the Older Americans Act. This principle, which represents a new trend in service delivery that will positively impact both clients and agencies, uses a holistic approach to service provision that promotes the dignity, strength, and empowerment of trauma victims by incorporating knowledge about that role of trauma in trauma victims' lives. Its inclusion in this bill is indicative of the forward and necessary progress embedded in the Dignity in Aging Act. The OAA Reauthorization bill also incorporates new support for age-friendly communities, a major new focus on social isolation in older adults, recognition of the emergency confronting our direct care workforce, an updating of, recognition and support for multigenerational families, and assistance to family caregivers with an extension of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act. Each of these provisions and many others contained in the bill will serve our nation well.

We also commend the Education and Labor Committee for supporting a five year reauthorization period for the Older Americans Act, which helps safeguard support and removes uncertainty for the growing aging population. Finally, and very importantly, this bill provides relatively robust funding increases of 7% for FY 2020 and 6% for each of the next four years. While still less than needed given the significant growth of the relevant population, this represents very welcome news.

With the Older American Act set to expire on September 30, 2019, this year's process to reauthorize it was the most efficient, transparent, bipartisan and productive of the five similar reauthorizations that I have worked on going back to 1999. The result is a reauthorization vehicle that is very worthy of support.

Sincerely,

Stephan O, Kline
Associate Vice President, Public Policy
The Jewish Federations of North America