

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 25, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

Thank you for all of your hard work supporting the many important national priorities funded in the FY 2014 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill. The aging of our nation's population makes it more important than ever that Older Americans Act (OAA) programs remain strong in the coming years. Accordingly, we respectfully request that you consider increasing the programmatic funding levels for all OAA programs and services in the coming federal fiscal year.

We are cognizant of the budgetary pressures on the Labor-HHS appropriations bill, and we do not make this request for an across the board funding increase lightly. However, several factors are driving the increased demand for OAA programs. First, there are more than 60 million Americans over age 60 today, and 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65 each and every day. Moreover, the fastest growing segment of the aging population is individuals over 85. This population has the greatest need for services provided under the OAA, including protection from abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

Meanwhile, the cost of living for seniors continues to rise, particularly in terms of food, medicine, fuel, and housing. These factors have led to a staggering 79 percent increase in the threat of hunger among older adults in the past decade. In addition, the average duration of unemployment for jobseekers over age 55 is almost 50 weeks, the longest of any age cohort.

Despite this growing need, federal funding levels for nutrition, supportive services and caregiver supports have failed to keep pace with inflation or the growth in our aging population. The Title V jobs program (Senior Community Service Employment Program) and the Title IV grants for innovation, research and training have been cut in recent years, and other OAA-authorized programs have never been funded. Meanwhile, many core programs report waiting lists, including home-delivered meals, in-home supports, and caregiver respite. In order for these vital programs just to catch up with the growth in the senior population and the increased costs of services over the past decade, the OAA budget would have to increase by at least 12 percent.

There are few better investments than the cost-effective OAA programs that millions of older adults depend on for a healthy and dignified life. Investing in OAA initiatives saves taxpayer dollars by reducing premature and costly Medicare and Medicaid expenditures that result from unnecessary nursing home placement or poor management of nutrition and chronic health conditions. Therefore, as you and your colleagues prepare the Labor-HHS appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you consider the importance of these programs and increase their funding levels accordingly.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



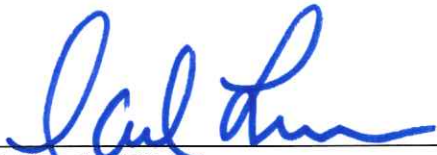
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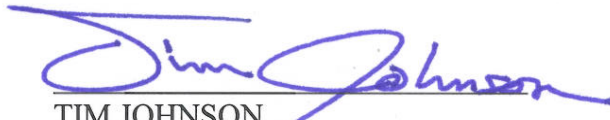
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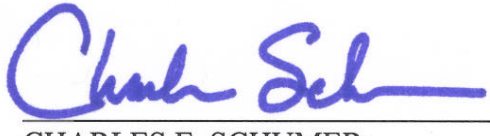
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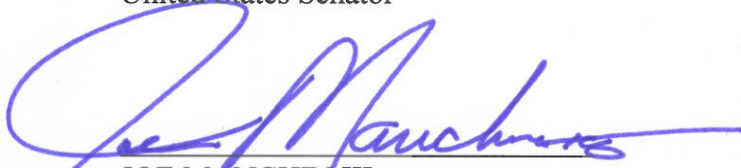

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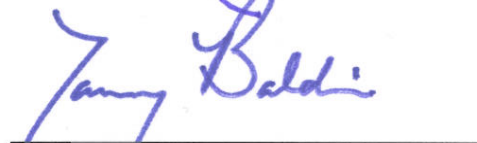

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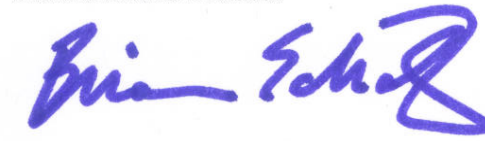

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