National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare™
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December 15, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders, Chairman
Retirement and Aging Subcommittee
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to thank you for introducing the *Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011*, which reauthorizes the Older Americans Act (OAA). We share your hope that this legislation and other proposals to strengthen the OAA will receive bipartisan support in Congress early in 2012.

Older Americans Act programs – such as in-home assistance, home-delivered and congregate meals, respite for family caregivers, preventive health services, job training and placement, and legal services - benefit individuals and their families. By helping seniors stay as independent as possible in their homes and communities, these programs also save federal and state government resources from being spent on sometimes unnecessary and often much more expensive care in hospitals and nursing homes. We understand that your legislation improves the OAA programs. In addition, your bill acknowledges that there is simply not enough money allocated for OAA programs to meet the needs of our growing elderly population.

The National Committee also applauds you for the provision in the *Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011* which requires the Secretary of Labor to revise and improve the experimental price index for the elderly, commonly referred to as the CPI-E, so that it can be considered as a replacement for the consumer price index that is being used to adjust Social Security benefits for inflation. We believe that the CPI-E is based on a market basket of goods that more accurately reflects the spending patterns of the elderly and thus is a better index for the purpose of protecting seniors from the harmful effects of inflation. Revising and improving the experimental CPI-E is an essential first step in its adoption as the CPI of record for the Social Security program.

Thank you for your leadership on the Older Americans Act reauthorization. We look forward to working with you to strengthen these important programs that go a long way toward ensuring economic security and independence for older Americans and their family caregivers.

Sincerely,

Max Richtman

Max Richtman
President and CEO

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President
Barbara J. Easterling

Secretary-Treasurer
Ruben Burks

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders, Chairman
Retirement and Aging Subcommittee
Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

On behalf of our four million members, the Alliance for Retired Americans writes to thank you for introducing the *Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011*. This legislation is vital to the health and economic security of millions of older Americans and their families.

The Older Americans Act (OAA) helps seniors to stay independent, healthy and productive through a wide range of services and programs, such as meals, job training, preventive health measures, senior centers and the ombudsman program. For years, OAA funding has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals eligible for services, yet demand by at-risk older adults in need of supportive services has risen and will only continue to rise with the growth in the aging population. Your legislation, with enhanced funding for these critical programs, will significantly address the shortfall and ensure that these programs continue to serve older Americans and their families.

In addition to supporting the many provisions that will strengthen funding for critical OAA programs, we are especially supportive of the legislation's provision calling for the revision and improvement of the experimental price index for the elderly (CPI-E). As you know, the current formula used to calculate the Social Security annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) does not accurately reflect the everyday costs that older Americans face. Revising the CPI-E so that it may replace the current formula used to measure the Social Security COLA is an improvement that will help our members better meet the mounting financial challenges they face.

Your introduction of the *Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011* demonstrates your commitment to the quality of life for retirees and older Americans. Should you have any questions, please contact Richard Fiesta or Sarah Byrne at the Alliance Department of Government and Political Affairs.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara J. Easterling	Ruben Burks	Edward F. Coyle
President	Secretary-Treasurer	Executive Director

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Defending Liberty
Pursuing Justice

Thomas M. Susman
Director
Governmental Affairs Office

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
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December 16, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
332 Dirksen Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: The Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011

Dear Senator Sanders:

On behalf of the American Bar Association and its nearly 400,000 members worldwide, I write to express our support for key provisions of your proposed bill, the "Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011."

The ABA has a particular interest in those portions of the Older Americans Act that ensure the safety and protection of older Americans through high quality long-term care ombudsman services and legal services. In August 2001, the ABA adopted policy supporting the independence, impartiality, and confidentiality of ombudsman programs. Later, in August 2010, the ABA adopted policy supporting the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act with a priority on elder justice and the delivery of legal services, enumerating nine specific elements of an effective legal services delivery system.

The ABA strongly supports those sections of the proposed Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011 that substantially enhance the effectiveness of the Act by:

1. Establishing needed protections to ensure the independence of State Long-term Care Ombudsman programs;
2. Empowering states to create a high quality, coordinated legal services delivery system that prioritizes advocacy for individuals with the greatest social and economic need and those at risk of institutionalization; and
3. Requiring states to select State Legal Services Developers who, to the maximum extent possible, agree to serve on a full-time basis, have a law degree, and possess certain knowledge, skills, training and education.

While the draft bill does not contain all the elements enumerated in our August 2010 policy, it goes a long way toward creating a high quality, coordinated legal services delivery system in each state that meets the needs of older persons most in need. As the ABA has no policy addressing the other components of the draft bill, we take no position on them.

We thank you and your staff for your resolute efforts in moving reauthorization of the Older Americans Act ahead and in soliciting input from the aging network organizations and stakeholders who have direct experience in the implementation of the Act. The ABA stands ready to be of assistance to you and your subcommittee in the reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman

December 16, 2011

Senator Bernard Sanders, Chair
Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

LeadingAge, formerly the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, (www.LeadingAge.org) wants to thank you for your leadership in the process of reauthorizing the Older Americans Act (OAA). "*The OAA Amendments of 2011"* will be a major catalyst towards the passage of a reauthorized Older Americans Act that will better serve elders in our communities. We appreciate that you highlighted the need to further define economic and social needs that impact older individuals who receive services, such as adult day programs, meal programs, and transportation. Also, we are pleased that the bill advances liveable communities that will help older individuals have better access to affordable transportation and housing.

LeadingAge includes 5,400 not-for-profit organizations in the United States, 38 state partners, hundreds of businesses, research partners, consumer organizations, foundations and a broad global network of aging services organizations that reach over 30 countries. The work of LeadingAge is focused on advocacy, leadership development, applied research, and the promotion of effective services, including: home health, hospice, community services, senior housing, assisted living residences, continuing care retirement communities, and nursing homes. LeadingAge is also involved in finding technology solutions for seniors, children, and others with special needs.

We applaud you for your commitment to older Americans, and we look forward to working with you throughout this reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

William L. Minnix, Jr.
President and CEO

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NAELA™
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, Inc.
Leading the Way in Special Needs and Elder Law℠

December 16, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chairman
Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys wishes to express its support for your draft bill the "Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011." In what would have been an otherwise dismal year for Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization prospects, you have been a true leader working toward this important goal. We thank you and your staff for the many hours that you have spent listening to stakeholders from across the county, establishing goals for this reauthorization, and drafting the bill that you shared with the aging network and others this week.

Throughout the reauthorization process, you have led your subcommittee and the full committee in a transparent and bipartisan process. For months, your subcommittee staff solicited feedback from stakeholders and aging organizations and we appreciated being a part of this process.

We write to congratulate you on this critical step toward reauthorization and ask that you keep up the hard work of securing passage of a bill in the Senate and pushing the House to do its work as well. We understand that you are working with other Senators to add to your draft bill, the "Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011," but your bill stakes out admirable positions on the need to address the insufficient funding that the Act has faced for many years. As you well know, it is impossible to fulfill the law's intent without the necessary resources to provide the meals, supportive services, senior centers, legal services, protection in long-term care facilities, jobs, and caregiver support that is so desperately needed across the nation. Further, funding these services has a proven record of reducing the cost of Medicare and Medicaid by preventing unnecessary hospitalizations and nursing home stays.

Our members see clients every day that have benefited or could benefit from OAA programs, and we are strong supporters of its reauthorization in this Congress. We particularly appreciate your work to strengthen many parts of the act, including the long-term care ombudsman program and legal services. Please let us know what we can do to help you in this effort.

Sincerely,

Peter Wacht, CAE
Executive Director
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

Edwin M. Boyer, Esq.
President
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

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NHCOA
NATIONAL HISPANIC COUNCIL ON AGING
Yanira Cruz – President & CEO

Working to improve the lives of Hispanic older adults and their families

December 19, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders, Chairman
Retirement and Aging Subcommittee
Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders,

On behalf of the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA) – the leading national organization working to improve the lives of Hispanic older adults, their families, and caregivers – we would like to express support for the *Older Americans Act (OAA) Amendments of 2011*. The *OAA Amendments of 2011* is a step in the right direction, and has the potential to improve and enrich the lives of millions of seniors across the country, particularly Hispanic older adults. Furthermore, we look forward to making it even stronger as it passes through Congress.

NHCOA is also appreciative that the Senate has such a strong voice through your leadership that highlights the vital role Administration on Aging (AoA) services and supports play in the lives of older adults across the country. The country is aging and diversifying at an unprecedented pace, which is why it is critical that we act swiftly to strengthen our national aging infrastructure. The *OAA Amendments of 2011* makes significant strides in addressing these challenges and works toward ensuring that needs of all older adults are adequately met, especially those who are most vulnerable, including Hispanic older adults.

Particularly, we would like to highlight the increase in funding for nutrition and health promotion services. The *OAA Amendments of 2011* will help make these services more readily available for those in most need, especially racially and ethnically diverse groups and LGBT older adults. NHCOA also applauds efforts to increase economic security for older adults, specifically by redefining "greatest economic need" to 200% of the federal poverty line. This provision, in addition to the call for increased research on the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly, will help change current measures that do not accurately represent all the costs older adults pay.

As the *OAA Amendments of 2011* moves forward in Congress, NHCOA looks forward to working with you and your colleagues to strengthen this important piece of legislation— such as adding measures to increase cultural competence in the delivery of services— so we can ensure that all older adults, regardless of where they live or who they are, can age in dignity, in place, and in the best possible health.

With sincere appreciation,

Yanira Cruz, Dr.PH
President & CEO

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Statement-Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, AIRS

December 15, 2011

AIRS, the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems would like to express its support for Senator Bernie Sanders' Older Americans Act Reauthorization bill. Over the past months, Senator Sanders, who serves as Chairman of the Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor & Pensions) Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging and his staff, have led an open and transparent reauthorization process.

This legislation represents the first bill to recognize that insufficient funding is the greatest obstacle the Older Americans Act faces in meeting its full potential to serve older Americans. AIRS recognizes this is the first step in the legislative process which it hopes will lead to the Older Americans Act being reauthorized.

As the process continues, we hope to strengthen the information and referral services provisions of the bill by including the preference that information and assistance be provided by an entity which is accredited by a program such as the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) using the *Standards for Professional Information and Referral* as well as encouraging that information and referral/aging professionals earn their Certification for Information and Referral Specialists in Aging (CIRS-A).

AIRS applauds you for your leadership and looks forward to continuing to work with you throughout this process.

Alliance of Information & Referral Systems

11240 Waples Mill Road, Suite 200 ● Fairfax, VA 22030 ● 703/218-2477 (AIRS): 703/359-7562 ● www.airs.org

The National CONSUMER VOICE for Quality Long-Term Care formerly NCCNHR

John Weir, President
Sarah F. Wells, Executive Director

Ph: 202.332.2275
Fax: 202.332.2949
www.theconsumervoice.org

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care strongly endorses the long-term care ombudsman program provisions in your bill, *The OAA Amendments of 2011.*

Residents of long-term care facilities around the country need effective advocacy in order to ensure that they receive the quality of care and quality of life that they deserve and to which they are entitled by law. The purpose of the long-term care ombudsman program is to be that advocate for residents. However, in far too many cases conflicts of interest, lack of clarity about the relationship between the State and local ombudsmen and other problems prevent the program from fulfilling its critical mission.

Your bill would improve the ability of ombudsmen to serve long-term care facility residents by: clarifying both organizational and individual conflicts of interest; increasing the unity and cohesiveness of the program by requiring local ombudsmen to report directly to the State Ombudsmen for all programmatic matters; expanding the responsibilities of the State Ombudsman to include fiscal management; and ensuring that the State Ombudsman receives ongoing training. It would also help nursing home residents and their families advocate on their own behalf for quality care by permitting national caregiver dollars to be used to support the ombudsman's work in developing nursing home resident and family councils. Enacting such requirements would make the long-term care ombudsman program a better, stronger and more independent advocate for this very vulnerable and frail population.

The Consumer Voice supports these important amendments and stands ready to assist you in obtaining passage of these provisions.

Sincerely,

Sarah Wells

Sarah F. Wells
Executive Director

Robyn Grant

Robyn Grant
Director, Advocacy & Outreach

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AIDS COMMUNITY RESEARCH INITIATIVE OF AMERICA 20 acria YEARS

GMHC FIGHT AIDS. LOVE LIFE.

sage Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders

December 16, 2011

Senator Bernie Sanders
Chair, Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
332 Dirksen Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all older Americans and for specifying older adults with HIV as a population of "greatest social need" in your proposed amendments to the Older Americans Act.

As the country's most significant vehicle for delivering services to older adults, the Older Americans Act (OAA) holds enormous potential for hundreds of thousands of HIV+ older adults nationwide, a demographic with profound needs that will only grow over the next few decades. HIV diagnoses among those over age 50 are on the rise, yet there are almost no HIV prevention programs targeted at older adults, and health care providers do not generally talk to their older patients about HIV (or other sexually transmitted infections). For a host of reasons, AIDS service organizations (ASOs) and other community-based organizations (CBOs) serving people with HIV are not prepared alone to meet the needs of those aging with HIV. Likewise, the existing senior services network across the country is ill-prepared to address the needs of older adults with HIV, and those most at risk, not least because of a lack of HIV knowledge and continuing myths, stigma, and discrimination.

Defining older adults with HIV as a population of greatest social need within the OAA will allow the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) to dedicate critical resources to states for community planning and social services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging. This is a key step in helping senior centers, nursing homes, and other senior programs address the unique HIV prevention and treatment needs of older adults. ACRIA, GMHC, and SAGE strongly share your belief that older adults with HIV should be specified as a population of greatest social need in the OAA.

You are one of Congress's leading advocates for older adults, and ACRIA, GMHC, and SAGE greatly appreciate your support for older adults with and at risk of HIV nationwide. We look forward to working with you, and all members of the committee, to continue improving the OAA for all older adults as we move through the reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

Daniel Tietz	Marjorie Hill	Michael Adams
Executive Director	Chief Executive Officer	Executive Director

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
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(202) 682-6899 (202) 223-2099 fax
www.nanasp.org

Statement

NANASP, the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs today indicated its strong support for the Older Americans Act reauthorization bill introduced by Chairman Bernie Sanders of the Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging. NANASP President Paul Downey said "NANASP commends both the bill and the process used by the Subcommittee to develop the bill. Their commitment to obtaining stakeholder input was strong and consistent. We also note that the one hearing held by the Subcommittee was on the nutrition programs. In terms of the bill, we are pleased at the provisions which improve and streamline the nutrition programs while making sure that nutrition dollars are protected to a greater extent."

In addition, NANASP was pleased that the bill preserves the dual mission of SCSEP, the Senior Community Service Employment Program and increases the opportunity for low-income older adults to serve their community, including helping other seniors.

NANASP appreciates Senator Sanders' leadership and looks forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee throughout this reauthorization process.

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Michael Adams, *Executive Director*

December 15, 2011

Senator Bernie Sanders
332 Dirksen Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders,

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all older Americans and for specifying lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults, as well as older adults with HIV, as populations of "greatest social need" in your proposed amendments to the Older Americans Act.

As the country's most significant vehicle for delivering services to older adults, the Older Americans Act (OAA) holds enormous potential for millions of LGBT older adults nationwide, a demographic with profound needs that will surge over the next few decades. Because LGBT older adults face significant and disproportionate barriers to successful aging—including fewer sources of support, higher poverty rates, and poor health and health access—they require unique services and supports. Unfortunately, these types of critical supports are scarce and severely underfunded—a problem that an LGBT-inclusive Older Americans Act could help rectify. SAGE strongly shares your belief that LGBT older adults and older adults with HIV should be specified as populations of greatest social need in the OAA.

You are one of Congress's leading advocates for older adults, and SAGE appreciates your support for LGBT elders nationwide. We look forward to working with you, and all members of the committee, to continue improving the OAA for all older adults as we move through the reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

Michael Adams
Executive Director

Anthony R. Sarmiento
President and Executive Director

Statement of Senior Service America Inc.
December 15, 2011

Senior Service America Inc. joins many others in supporting the Older Americans Act reauthorization bill of Senator Bernie Sanders, Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging. We are especially pleased that Title V of the bill includes several enhancements to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which remains the only federal workforce development and aging services program focused on unemployed low-income older adults.

For growing numbers of older Americans today, paid work is a necessity, not a choice. By providing opportunities to serve, learn, and earn, SCSEP helps low-income older adults to stay healthy and independent by returning to work. SCSEP is a proven program that provides income to economically disadvantaged older Americans and augments the staff of over 30,000 local community programs.

Our nation can ill afford to ignore the rising costs and human toll of prolonged joblessness, especially among older Americans. Senior Service America supports the leadership of Senator Sanders to assist disadvantaged older workers and will continue to offer our expertise during the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

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www.seniorserviceamerica.org

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY
...don't cut it.

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

On behalf of the Strengthen Social Security Campaign, which is comprised of more than 320 organizations representing more than 50 million members from many of the nation's leading aging, labor, disability, women's, children's, consumer, civil rights, and equality organizations, we write to express our strong support for the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2011 and the critical mission of improving economic security for our nation's elderly.

Your bill includes many important provisions to increase the economic security of older Americans. Among them is an important next step toward moving to the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) for determining cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) in Social Security benefits, which is a more accurate measure of seniors' true cost of living. As you know, Social Security's annual automatic COLA is essential because it assures that inflation does not erode the value of benefits over time. The current COLA, based on the CPI-W, does not adequately take into account health care costs, which constitute a higher proportion of seniors' income and are rising rapidly. These costs grow at a much faster rate than the prices of other goods and services.

Since the purpose of the cost of living adjustment is to ensure that Social Security benefits maintain their purchasing power no matter how long someone lives, it should reflect the specific spending patterns of seniors and people with disabilities – not the general population, which has different needs. The CPI-E is a more accurate measure of the increases in costs that seniors and persons with disabilities experience, and, we believe, a more appropriate index. We applaud your commitment to improving the CPI-E so that it can replace the CPI-W in determining Social Security COLAs.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to protect our nation's most successful economic security program.

Sincerely,

Nancy Altman	Eric Kingson	Frank Clemente	Alex Lawson
Campaign Co-Chair	Campaign Co-Chair	Campaign Manager	Executive Director Social Security Works

Strengthen Social Security • 1825 K St. NW, Ste. 400 • Washington, DC 20006
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National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund

Build Power Take Action Create Change

December 16, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sanders,

On behalf of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund, the oldest national lesbian gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organization in the country we want to stand in support of Senator Bernie Sanders' Older Americans Act 2011 Amendments to the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA).

The Task Force has a long history of working on behalf of LGBT seniors dating back to the publication of Outing Age in 2000, a groundbreaking documentation of the lives of LGBT older adults. Then, as now, the lack of federal recognition of seniors in same-sex couples creates a particular disadvantage. These seniors receive no partner or reciprocal benefits and find themselves excluded from survivor benefits in Social Security due to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). LGB adults between the ages of 50-70 have higher rates of serious chronic physical and mental health conditions but less access to the healthcare they need. Even though heterosexual and same-sex couples are equally reliant on Social Security in their retirement years, same-sex couples receive, on average, benefits that are 17.8% less for gay male couples, and 31.5% less for lesbian couples as compared to straight married couples. The difference is particularly pronounced for racial minority lesbian couples and often means the difference between survival and severe poverty. For transgender seniors the situation is even more dire. As cited in Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, from the Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality, we know that **transgender people are four times more likely to be living in a household income of less than $10,000 per year.** Due to a lifetime of employment discrimination and health disparities affecting income potential as LGBT people and their families age, we know all too well the risks our community faces in trying to prepare for old age due to severely diminished savings and Social Security benefits.

The programs of the OAA provide important and often life-savings services for all older people. The act currently requires the Assistant Secretary for Aging to annually report to the President and to the Congress on the activities carried out under the Older Americans Act. This report includes statistical data and an analysis of information regarding the effectiveness of the State agency and area agencies on aging in targeting services to older individuals identified to have the greatest economic need and older individuals with greatest social need, with particular attention to low-income minority individuals, older individuals residing in rural areas, low-income individuals, and frail individuals (including individuals with any physical or mental functional impairments. Senator Sanders' proposed amendments to the OAA will add lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV positive older people in the list of people with "greatest social need". This critical amendment will begin to document the ability of the OAA to serve the particular needs of LGBT and HIV positive older adults, and will aid in the development of evidence-based practices to more effectively use the resources authorized for programs under the Act through the Aging Network.

We are proud to endorse Senator Sanders' 2011 Older Americans Act Amendments.

Respectfully,

Rea Carey, Executive Director