

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2101

April 3, 2014

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

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

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran,

As you consider the Subcommittee's funding priorities for Fiscal Year 2015, we urge you to increase funding by at least 12 percent above FY 2014 levels for programs authorized under the Older Americans Act (OAA). Your past support for OAA programs has been strong and has resulted in vital assistance for millions of older Americans. With the historic aging of our nation's population, increased funding for OAA programs is particularly critical in the coming years.

As you know, OAA is the major federal vehicle for the delivery of social and nutrition services for 11 million older Americans. These programs include congregate nutrition services, home-delivered nutrition services (i.e., "Meals on Wheels"), supportive services such as transportation services, employment and community service through the Senior Community Service Employment Program, vulnerable elder rights protection, and family caregiver support.

The demand for these programs is great, and in many areas of the country, vulnerable seniors are on waiting lists for services that they desperately need. Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to increase for seniors, particularly for food, medicine, fuel, and housing. Moreover, the demand is only expected to increase. Today, there are more than 60 million Americans over the age of 60, with 10,000 Baby Boomers turning 65 every day. The U.S. Census projects that these trends will continue for the next few decades, and by 2030, the number of Americans age 60 and over will increase to 92 million.

Regretfully, federal funding levels for OAA programs have failed to keep pace with inflation or the growing need, despite the cost-effectiveness of these critical programs. There are few better investments than the OAA programs that millions of older adults rely on for a healthy and dignified life. Investing in OAA services saves taxpayer dollars by reducing premature and costly Medicare and Medicaid expenditures resulting from unnecessary nursing home placement or hospitalizations due to poor nutrition and chronic health conditions.

At a minimum, a 12 percent increase – \$225 million – over FY 2014 spending levels would recognize the growth in the senior population and the increased costs of services over the past decade. A 12 percent increase, though still insufficient, would be an important step toward meeting existing demand.

Additionally, we would like to call your attention to several Title III programs within OAA, subject to a "hold harmless" provision, where additional funds would be necessary in order for states to receive a more equitable distribution of dollars per senior. To reach beneficiary equity across most states, Title III-B Supportive Services would require an additional \$74 million, Title III-C1 Congregate Meals would require an additional \$64 million, and Title III-D Disease Prevention and Health Promotion would require an additional \$4 million above FY 2014 appropriated amounts.

We realize you face very difficult fiscal constraints. However, we ask that you consider the value and need for OAA services, and fund these programs at the highest possible levels.

We greatly appreciate your consideration, and we look forward to working with you to ensure a sustained investment in OAA services and programs.

Sincerely,



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United States Senator



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



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United States Senator



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United States Senator



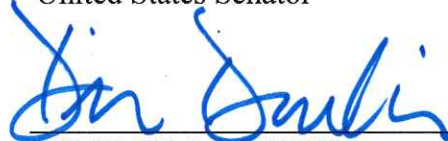
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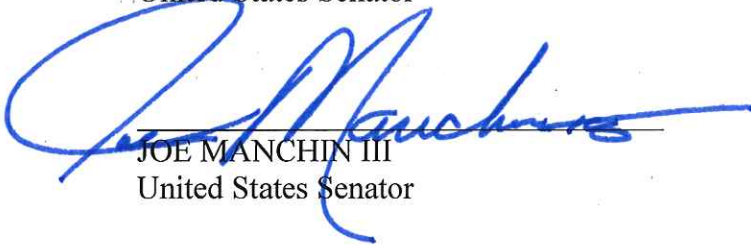
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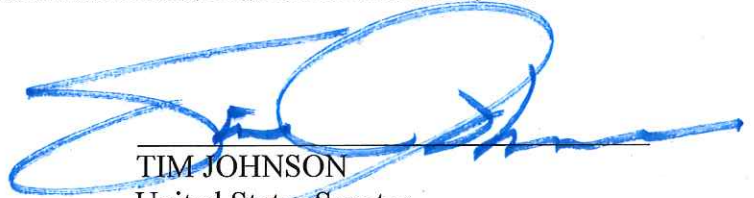
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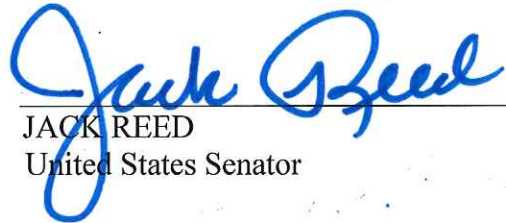
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