

United States Administration on Aging  
Re-authorization of Older Americans Act  
Listening Forum  
Alexandria, VA  
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Statement of  
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Good afternoon Assistant Secretary Greenlee and thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of all older citizens and the future populations of elders to be serviced by various programs and services funded under the Older Americans Act.

I am privileged to report that I have been providing services to older Rhode Islanders for more than 30 years, most of which funded under the Older Americans Act. I have witnessed the change in the types of programs funded today as compared to 30 years ago; I feel strongly that it is now time to modernize the act to meet the present and future needs of our aging populations.

Today my message to you and your staff is that there needs to be consideration for creating a more flexible funding stream within the Act, with a focus on developing programs and services that focus on building an aging network infrastructure that will assist elders to remain in the community with the supportive services they choose to keep them independent. In order to meet this commitment we must place emphasis on the following core programs:

- **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Develop dedicated funding for transportation services by creating a cost-sharing system that will provide elders access to those social and medical networks which meet their social, cognitive, and functional needs. The lack of transportation cause great isolation for elders who want to remain active and involved in the community.

Transportation creates an added value to our society. It provides the elder the opportunity to access the local community where they can participate in mentoring programs with persons of all ages. This is a “win-win” situation. Transportation is the link to healthy aging in America

- **NUTRITION SERVICES**

Congregate and Home Delivered nutrition services began in Rhode Island during the early 70s and has consistently served increasing number of elders each year. This program is seen as a Health Prevention/Health Promotion program and there is a need for continued flexibility within this program. It is time to examine the present utilization of the program and plan for future generations; therefore, it is my suggestion that Administration on Aging combine both C1 and C2 under Title III. Data collected supports the need for this change since states are finding that the congregate program shows a decline in participation and the home delivered shows increased need. This consolidation will provide states the ability to direct nutrition dollars to areas of greatest need.

As AoA continues to work with states in modernizing the Act, the consolidated IIC program will assist states in planning differently for the new generation of participants coming along. States should be encouraged to begin new programs within the nutrition settings: such as, restaurant programs, café programs, and evening meal programs. New and innovative program ideas will begin to meet the needs of elders who are presently employed and who are seeking a social environment where nutritional needs are met. Evening programs can be supported by wellness programs such as exercise, dance, weight control, and managing chronic conditions.

States want to serve the increased diverse populations and must begin to plan for this population with the support of AoA.

- **RESPIRE CARE SERVICES**

The re-authorization of the Older Americans Act must provide continued sustainability for the National Family Caregiver Support Program by combining the Lifespan Respite Care Act funding with NFCSP. As states plan and provide additional respite care services the demand grows for older caregivers and for grandparents to take on the responsibility for caring for and about grandchildren. Respite across the Lifespan will provide the additional resources and allow the flexibility for all caregivers whose value is to keep their loved ones in the community with the necessary supports.

- **AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTERS**

The AoA should provide permanent funding for the ADRC which have become the “one stop” centers for elders, caregivers, children of aging parents, and the community at large. ADRC, with their local branding, are becoming like your local “STARBUCKS.” Certainly the partnership that AoA and CMS envisioned when creating this program has come to fruition.

ADRC are the place where benefits specialists provide the assessment, coaching, direction and problem solving. ADRC have and will continue to save the state’s budget dollars in that a caregiver is able to access the ADRC during non traditional business hours (evenings and Saturdays). With one visit or one phone call the benefit specialist can screen in or out for a variety of programs and services, and in addition, provide direction and information to those individuals who are above income limits for any state funded programs. The ADRC are for all people, regardless of income and are there to assist any and all.

By providing permanent funding for this program it allows states, with the present limited staffing patterns, to allocate more time to program management and program monitoring. It eliminates the need and concern of the constant strain of staff

having to respond to new RFP issued by Administration on Aging.

If a state is meeting the program deliverable, as developed by AoA, and if states are providing “Best Practice Models” to AoA, it appears that it is time to initiate permanent funding for this program.

- **ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

As we are all very aware, the Older Americans Act has become the safety net in preventing elder abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of so many at risk elders in the community. However, with recent cuts in state budgets, the local funding has not been available to support this program at prior funding levels. Many states struggle to maintain the staff that provides the investigations and interventions for this population.

APS services are a priority. APS services must be considered a core program of the Act and it now requires increased funding in Title VII. It should remain separate and apart from the Title III program funding. APS should never lose its visibility. It needs to become more prominent and this will be possible with the passage of the Elder Justice Act. Clients served within the Adult Protective Services programs in each state are to be considered top priority clients.

With the re-authorization of the Older Americans Act, Title VII provides an opportunity to assist states in training direct service staff, develop “Best Practice” service models, develop mentoring programs, and develop models which will assist staff in responding to and investigating the very complex situations reported each day in each community in the United States

- **CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

Case management is the service that supports community based services. It is these workers who provide the assessment, develop the care plan, support the caregiver, implement

appropriate services along the continuum of care and monitor these services. Case Management is the glue that holds all services together and holds providers accountable for elder care. Continued support is requested for this service as it is a core service and provides elders choice.

- **STATE FUNDING FORMULAS**

Assistant Secretary Greenlee I request that you assist AoA staff in addressing the present Older Americans ACT funding formula assigned to various states. As you know, the State of Rhode Island is one of the states that receives minimum funding under the Act, however, Rhode Island has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest percentage of persons aged 65 plus as compared to overall population. In addition, because of this minimum funding formula, Rhode Island has not received any increase in administrative costs. Other states not under this formula have received increases in administrative costs. I believe it is an appropriate time to examine the methodology for funding all states.

In closing, I thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony and look forward to working with you and your staff during these exciting times. I appreciate your commitment to all elders in the United States.