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Northern Arizona Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging

Testimony for Federal Listening Session

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Good afternoon Assistant Secretary Greenlee and Administration on Aging staff. Thank you for this opportunity to listen, to learn, and to speak. My name is Mary Beals- Luedtka, Northern Arizona Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging, Director. And Region 9 board member for n4a I am going to address, briefly, more flexibility in the Act.

Earlier, a gentleman mentioned one of the beauties of the OAA is the emphasis on local control, local planning. Secretary Greenlee pointed out that the OAA was designed to small at the top and large at the bottom. But in the practice that is often not the case due to the silos created within the Titles of the Act.

Each community is unique, with its own personality, their own assets, and their own needs. It ties our hands when we are given instructions on how to spend our funding. One excellent example is C1 and C2. The Area Agencies on Aging need to have more flexibility in the delivery of nutrition services. In some town, or cities or counties, they fund the senior center and the congregate sites so they need more funding for meals on wheels. In some they heavily support home delivered meals and are at risk of losing important focal points in the community along with nutrition education, socialization and health & wellness programs. In other areas C1 is a dying program all together. I propose a Title C – period- no C1 or C2 giving the Area Agencies on Aging the opportunity to meet local needs, including transportation.

Sandy Markwood is saying, “It is time to be bold”. The demographics speak for themselves. This is our opportunity to modernize the OAA and transition programs to meet the needs of the new aging, the old – old and the ethnic diversity that is changing. We need to meet local needs and do what is best for older American’s now.

Another example is IIID, 25% has to be spent on medication management. 25% of so little funding delutes the small amount we have. We should be able to decide at the local level to spend that small amount of funding in the best way.

We need to look at the ability to utilize cost sharing, particularly in congregate meals. One of our communities is on the interstate, Black, Canyon City, and because they can’t charge for congregate meals they feel they have become a soup kitchen for the transients.

Home and community based services were discussed earlier as a core service but there is no specific title for them. Funding in AZ has relied on the State but those are drying up. There is only so much Title

IIIB funds to go around. There should be more emphasis on home and community based services in the Act.

And last, Title V is still implemented by DOL and it should be under the aging network as it is a title in the OAA and the SCSEP program is losing it's community service part.