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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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www.help.senate.gov

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To Interested Parties:

The Older Americans Act (OAA; P.L. 89-73, as amended; 42 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.), was first enacted in 1965 to provide a broad range of services and programs for older adults. Congress has reauthorized and amended OAA over a dozen times to include services for individuals with disabilities, family caregivers, and those living in nursing homes. OAA's programs are administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Community Living (ACL), as well as the Department of Labor (DOL). OAA was last reauthorized in 2020 and will expire on September 30, 2024.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on older Americans and demonstrated the value of OAA programs for older adults. As part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act Congress granted flexibilities to assist organizations in adjusting their operations throughout the pandemic. The Committee is seeking feedback on how pandemic-era flexibilities as well as policies enacted by the 2020 reauthorization worked or did not work in responding to the needs of older adults.

Reauthorizing OAA is a priority of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. We look forward to working with interested stakeholders as we move legislation through the committee of jurisdiction. We ask for written responses on the following inquiries submitted to OAA@help.senate.gov, by March 21, 2024. Please provide data and primary source information, as is feasible, in answering the questions specific to HELP Committee's jurisdiction below. You may also choose to provide line edits to current law or other proposed legislative text to supplement your narrative response.

General Questions:

1. What are the biggest challenges currently facing the older adult population? How have OAA programs performed historically in addressing these challenges? How can OAA programs be improved upon to better address these challenges?
2. What are your top priorities for OAA reauthorization? Please explain why.

3. The demographics of the older adult population are changing rapidly: Please describe changing needs and how the aging network (including area agencies on aging, senior centers, state units on aging, aging and disability resource centers, centers for independent living, etc.) plans to address them.
4. What changes could Congress make to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of OAA services and programs?

Targeted Questions:

1. Legislation passed by Congress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic made temporary changes to some OAA programs, including flexibility for nutrition services funding and adjustments to eligibility for home-delivered meals.
 - a. What impact did these changes have on older adults and program operations?
 - b. How should Congress consider these changes outside of a public health emergency?
 - c. What changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic but not mentioned above should Congress examine for this reauthorization?
 - d. How should Congress consider the impact of the pandemic when working to reauthorize OAA?
2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, OAA partners, including congregate meal providers, adapted to new ways of delivering services, such as providing grab and go meals.
 - a. In the absence of a public health emergency, is it appropriate to retain flexibility in meal delivery services for the congregate meals program? If so, why? What effect would changes in meal delivery services have on older Americans?
 - b. Should Congress consider any requirements related to different ways of providing congregate meals?
3. Congress made several changes to OAA through the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020, including adding caregiver assessments to the National Family Caregiver Support Program as well as efforts to improve social isolation.
 - a. Have these policies better informed resources needed by caregivers or older Americans? Please explain why or why not, and if yes, how.
 - b. How can Congress improve these efforts?
 - c. What changes made in the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 but not mentioned above should Congress examine for this reauthorization?
4. ACL recently finalized regulations regarding OAA. Should Congress consider any changes in response to the new rule?

Sincerely,

Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders
Chair
Senate HELP Committee

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate HELP Committee

Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Mike Braun

Mike Braun
United States Senator

Tim Kaine

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Susan M. Collins

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