

April 1, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader McConnell:

I write today on behalf of the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD), our members, and the seniors, family caregivers, and persons with disabilities they serve. NASUAD represents the 56 officially designated state and territorial agencies on aging. Each of our members oversees the implementation of the Older Americans Act (OAA) and many of our members serve as the operating agency in their states for Medicaid home and community based services (HCBS) waivers that serve older adults, and in some cases, individuals with disabilities. **NASUAD offers the following recommendations with respect to HR 1, the long-term FY 2011 Continuing Resolution:**

Administration on Aging

During an economic downturn, our first priority should be those who are most vulnerable, including older Americans. The senior nutrition programs, and all Older Americans Act programs, target this very population. In fact, demand for services increased as seniors lost income during this economic downturn. More than half of the states reported increased demands for information and referrals, home-delivered meals, respite care, case management, personal care, family caregiver support, and transportation and homemaker services in FY 2010. **That is why NASUAD opposes the cut of \$65 million to the Administration on Aging, which administers these programs through the Aging Network.**

Older Americans Act – Nutrition Programs

HR 1 proposes flat funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) nutrition programs, including Congregate Meals, Home-Delivered Meals, and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program. These programs are critical for addressing the growing problem of senior hunger. **NASUAD urges Congress to increase funding for senior nutrition for the remainder of FY 2011. This is particularly important at a time when the ARRA stimulus funding of \$100 million for senior nutrition has run out.**

“Weathering the Storm,” a comprehensive state survey conducted by NASUAD, Health Management Associates, and AARP Public Policy Institute, was completed in the summer of 2010. At the time, 32 states reported increased requests for home-delivered meals, and 20 states reported increased requests for congregate meals. States also indicated that the expiration of the ARRA nutrition funding would have a significant impact on their OAA nutritional programs; 27 states reported that their nutritional services’ waiting list will increase, and 20 states said that services will be reduced as a result of the cuts in funding. An additional 12 states reported that programs will be reduced, while six states indicated that programs will be eliminated. Currently, six million seniors, one in nine, are at risk of hunger, while 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 years old daily. Level funding for senior nutrition will only allow this crisis to grow.

Older Americans Act – Senior Employment & Training Programs

HR 1 cuts by \$525 million, almost two-thirds, the job training and placement program for low-income seniors under the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP), our nation's only jobs program designed to help older Americans in need. The cut would result in the loss of over 83,000 part-time jobs. Older workers who have lost a job are more likely than any other age group to face very long-term unemployment and remain jobless for 99 weeks or more. **NASUAD urges Congress to maintain funding for SCSEP, to help senior citizens find employment.**

Other Critical Programs for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities:

Commodity Supplement Food Program

Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Commodity Supplement Food Program (CSFP) leverages government buying power to provide nutritionally balanced food packages to more than 600,000 low-income people each month, including seniors and individuals with disabilities. More than 96% of those benefiting from this program are seniors with incomes of less than 130% of the federal poverty level, which is approximately \$14,000 for a senior living alone. For many of these seniors, CSFP may be the only nutrition assistance program readily accessible to them. HR 1 targeted CSFP for deep cuts of \$20 million from the current level of \$171.4 million. This would result in more than 81,000 low-income seniors being immediately dropped from this vital program. **NASUAD urges Congress to maintain CSFP funding for the remainder of FY 2011, as this program is critical to addressing the hunger crisis among vulnerable Americans.**

LIHEAP

HR 1 cuts the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) contingency fund by \$390 million. The President may release these funds to assist with home energy needs arising from an emergency situation, such as extreme weather conditions or energy price increases. Generally, funds are distributed based on the degree of severity of the emergency in a state. Forty percent of LIHEAP recipients are from households with at least one resident who is over the age of 60. **NASUAD urges Congress not to slash LIHEAP contingency funding by two-thirds, which stands to endanger seniors and individuals with disabilities when they are most vulnerable to extreme conditions.**

Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program

HR 1 includes cuts to the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program by \$551 million. Affordable senior housing is a problem, like many, that is increasing as the Baby Boomers age. Currently, ten seniors wait for each federal housing assistance unit that becomes available. Housing assistance can mean the difference between meeting basic monthly needs and going without. Additionally, the shortage of affordable housing is a major barrier in transitioning individuals from nursing homes back into the community, which strains the Medicaid program and state budgets. **NASUAD urges Congress to fund 202 Housing for the Elderly as a crucial element for keeping seniors in their communities and for transitioning them out of costly institutions.**

Corporation for National and Community Service – Senior Corps

HR 1 eliminates funding for the Senior Corps programs, conceived during the Kennedy presidency, which link over 500,000 Americans aged 55 and older to service opportunities. The Foster Grandparent Program connects older volunteers with opportunities to provide mentoring, and support to children and young people with exceptional needs. Additionally, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)

volunteers help 676,000 seniors to live independently, mentor more than 16,000 children, and provide assistance to victims of natural disasters. Finally, the Senior Companion Program provides the support needed to help thousands of frail seniors remain independent in their homes at a cost much lower than institutional care, and also provides much needed respite to family caregivers. In each of these programs, volunteers serve as important community resources and derive significant emotional and health benefits, which can improve their own quality of life. **NASUAD urges Congress to maintain Senior Corps program funding levels.**

CSBG

HR 1 cuts the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program current funding of \$700 million by nearly 50 percent. States use this funding to assist 2.3 million low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities with home care, adult protective services, transportation and nutrition. To reduce CSBG funding during the state budget crises would be devastating. **NASUAD urges Congress to maintain CSBG funding for the remainder of FY 2011.**

Now is clearly not the time to flat fund or defund these programs. Cuts to programs that provide long-term services and supports will only lead to increased costs in the future due to hospital and nursing home admissions. Defunding these programs runs the risk of actually increasing the federal debt on top of the human cost to older Americans and individuals with disabilities. NASUAD urges you to take this into consideration as you make final decisions with regard to the FY 2011 continuing resolution. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Martha Roherty
Executive Director

CC:

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies

The Honorable Kathy Greenlee
Assistant Secretary for Aging
U.S. Administration on Aging