



PROJECT 2020

Building on the Promise of Home
and Community-Based Services



November 24, 2009

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Dirksen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

The National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA) and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) thank you for your continued leadership on S. 1257, *Project 2020: Building on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Services Act of 2009*. The bill would be a major step forward in our collective efforts to improve the way long-term services and supports are coordinated, funded and delivered at the state and local levels throughout the United States.

We urge you to offer S. 1257 as an amendment to the health care reform legislation soon to come to the Senate floor. While it would have been ideal to have mandatory funding tied to this bill, we, like many stakeholders in health reform, are willing to make compromises to advance our underlying goal. We believe this amendment without mandatory funding would still represent a significant advancement in laying the infrastructure for long-term services and supports. Introducing *Project 2020* as an amendment also is an important way to recognize long-term care as a critical element of overall health care reform. This will also send the message loud and clear that the long-term care programs administered by AoA that provide seniors and persons with disabilities with needed information and support, help them to remain healthy, and enable them to live successfully at home with supports rather than be institutionalized—are all part of the solution.

A *Project 2020* (S. 1257) amendment:

1. *Builds on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Services with Strong Authorization Language*

S. 1257 represents a well thought-out, balanced and thorough approach to taking the CMS-AoA demonstration programs to scale nationally. If it were to pass as a part of health care reform, we would have congressional approval for expansion of these tested and proven programs to improve access to and delivery of long-term services and supports. The Aging Services Network—in partnership with CMS—has been organizing and implementing these activities successfully for years on a pilot basis and stands ready to take the programs to national scale, which would be a significant victory for all the millions of older adults and caregivers the programs would reach. While we recognize the reality that funding would not be immediately tied to the passage of S. 1257, we believe that aging Americans are ultimately better served by securing authorization at this time, in this bill.

2. *Positions the Legislation Well for Future Funding Opportunities*

Passing S. 1257 as a part of health care reform, and particularly under the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee, moves the mission of the Aging Services Network forward in a bold and significant way. By connecting the cost-saving nature of these proven programs to the arena in which they save money (mandatory funding committees), a major goal of *Project 2020* would be accomplished. We fully understand that passing S.

1257 at this time does not ensure any new funding, but we believe that where and when the bill is co-located and passed will offer ideal positioning for our future advocacy efforts to secure the necessary funding.

It is our belief that simply amending the Older Americans Act to include S. 1257 would not accomplish the same goal. While the excellent program expansion details would still become law, it would not change the dynamic we have faced for years: good authorization language amending OAA, but such limited domestic discretionary appropriations that implementation remains elusive.

While funding is not currently available for these programs from the Senate Finance Committee, we believe that we are better positioned to secure future funding for S. 1257 if we get the authorization as currently written. After the passage of health care reform legislation, n4a and NASUA are committed to working with you to continue to educate CBO on the savings of home and community-based services. If and when we can secure a positive CBO score, we would only be able to use it to secure funding **if** *Project 2020* was housed in the Social Security Act and not the Older Americans Act.

3. Presents the Best Advancement Opportunity for Years to Come

Building on that premise, we believe that waiting until we can have it all in terms of authorization and immediate funding is not the best course of action. It is unlikely that Senate Finance Committee will be taking up the issue of long-term services and supports reform anytime soon and as mentioned previously, amending the Older Americans Act through its 2011 reauthorization is not the bold game-changing approach that *Project 2020* is based upon.

On behalf of our members—the 56 State Units on Aging, 629 Area Agencies on Aging and 244 Title VI Native American Aging Programs across the nation and most importantly the millions of older Americans and persons with disabilities who this legislation could potentially serve—we appreciate all that you have done to introduce and advance S. 1257 to bring these vital programs to scale and to every community. Should you decide to offer an amendment in the coming weeks, we stand ready to pour on the grassroots support necessary to secure a winning vote. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further discussion.

Sincerely,



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