



Council of Senior Centers & Services of NYC, Inc.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OAA REAUTHORIZATION
JANUARY 19, 2012**

Increase Funding: Programs nationally are struggling to make ends meet within existing budgets as they contend with record demand for nutritional supports and with rising costs for food, fuel and rent. In the face of these challenges, OAA funding to New York State has remained nearly flat for many years. In this context, CSCS joins the NYC Department for the Aging in recommending increasing OAA funding by at least 12 percent above current levels so that programs nationally can weather the tough times while keeping pace with projected population growth and price increases.

Recommendations for Reauthorization:

- 1. Promote Economic Security:** CSCS participated in the National Council on Aging's "One Away" campaign for economic security for older Americans. Thousands of older adults are all too often one step away from financial, health or social tragedy. Please see the "One Away" campaign videos CSCS did of elderly New Yorkers at www.cscs-ny.org

CSCS would greatly appreciate Senator Gillibrand doing a video or written statement in support of protecting and strengthening the Older Americans Act (OAA) for the "One Away" Campaign. Please go to this link to see other Senators who have done this. <http://www.oneaway.org/SupportOAA>. CSCS would let its members and others in NY state and city know about the video or statement. We strongly recommend, and support NCOA's work (<http://www.ncoa.org/enhance-economic-security/economic-security-Initiative/a-blueprint-for-economic-security.html>), to establish economic security as a primary goal of the OAA, enhance measurement of economic need and interventions, and invest in testing and disseminating innovative strategies to enable older adults to attain economic security (including expanding access to coordinated benefits, debt management and credit counseling, and housing options). **In order to accomplish this, the OAA needs to authorize specific programs to be utilized by local communities:**

- a. Access to benefits** - NCOA's access-to-benefits tool has been proven nationally to facilitate the accessing of critical benefits by seniors and is a good model for OAA. <http://www.benefitscheckup.org/> Access to benefits such as food stamps is a critical need for older

New Yorkers. Only about one-third of eligible seniors utilize food stamps. NYC receives the only grant to a major city from USDA for a two year outreach project on food stamps, called “Hunger Free Communities”. CSCS is part of the nine group consortium which also includes the NYC Department for the Aging, AARP and Met Council on Jewish Poverty working on the senior outreach piece. Senior centers and other programs funded through OAA are on the best positioned agencies to do access to benefits as they know the senior community they work in. Federal benefits put millions of dollars in the pockets of low income seniors who then spend the money locally. This is a win-win way to help both seniors and provide for economic development of local communities.

- b. Housing with services:** In recent years, despite the growing need for supportive senior housing, appropriations for the section 202 programs have been dramatically reduced. In New York City waiting lists for a 202 housing vacancy can be six years or longer. The need for the construction for new affordable housing is great as is the need to better integrate aging supportive services into existing senior housing.

Affordable housing with services is integral to allowing seniors to age in place. Housing needs to be recognized as a cornerstone to a community-based long term care system. Assisting seniors in the development of affordable senior housing *with* services and accessing affordable housing options should play a central role in OAA funded services. **OAA should be a source of funding for the services provided at senior housing.**

CSCS joins the NYC Department for the Aging in recommending the addition of a new subsection under Title III aimed at connecting supportive services with congregate housing settings, including federally-assisted rental housing and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Rental Housing. This new subsection would include its own authorized funding amounts for a range of services, including all service categories currently outlined under Title III B Services including case management, transportation, meals and in-home services. This new program would continue to be operated within AAAs, who would receive the funds and enter into contracts with housing providers to offer their services at the congregate housing sites. The new subsection would include provisions focusing on how the programs would coordinate with other Title III programs; interact with HUD Section 202 housing service coordinators; grant allocation; technical assistance; quality assurance; and oversight.

- 2. Retain voluntary donation system and reject cost-sharing for meals:** The voluntary donation system works well in that it leverages hundreds of millions of dollars nationally that are re-invested back into senior centers. CSCS opposes cost-sharing as this would require seniors to share verifiable income information. The Administration on Aging (AoA) supports cost-sharing as seen by the 11 principles on its website:

(http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/Reauthorization/docs/OAAreauth_summaries_stakeholders.pdf).

Currently, seniors are asked for income information, but it is voluntary whether or not to respond. We are concerned this will become a barrier to participation as seniors won't want to share this information and it is time consuming. Most senior centers do not have much staff. There is widespread opposition to cost-sharing within the senior center community in New York. While cost-sharing is not in the Sanders bill, we remain concerned it may be inserted in the House bill or at another time as the reauthorization process moves ahead. Please see the WNBC cost-sharing report – www.cscs-ny.org – right side of home page.

3. **Maintain current law for the nutrition programs' (Title III-C) allocations and transfer authority**– The crux of OAA is the funding for congregate and home-delivered meals.
 - a. CSCS opposes any consolidation of Title III-C (1) and (2). We support maintaining current law to keep congregate and home-delivered meals' funding separate. We are concerned that consolidating the two programs will essentially create a meals funding block grant, making it difficult, if not impossible, for local communities to see how the money is spent and how decisions are made. This would impair transparency. We are also concerned that funds will be taken away from congregate meals.
 - b. CSCS supports maintaining current law which allows for a minimum of 65% of funding to fund congregate meals and 35% to home-delivered meals. The Sanders bill proposes to decrease the congregate meals minimum to 40%, with a 25% flexible fund to be used for either meals program, or services that support meals delivery, such as transportation. We believe this will lead to a siphoning away of funds from senior center congregate meals. **The bill that Senator Sanders introduces this month may drop this proposal, and retain current law, which we would support.**
 - c. We also support maintaining current law for the transfer authority from Title III-B to Title III-C. The Sanders bill would limit the transfer amount from 30% to 25%.
4. **Support Modern Senior Centers: There is currently no dedicated funding stream for senior centers to help them increase their capacity and introduce new programs and services to meet the coming age wave.** While the OAA does authorize resources for developing and maintaining multipurpose senior centers, the funding is rarely provided given other demands for OAA services in local communities. CSCS recommends the creation of new opportunities to modernize multipurpose senior centers to foster innovation, build leadership and capacity, be more inclusive of elderly populations served, and promote pathways for centers to shape and deliver aging services, including congregate and home-delivered meals. **Support authorization language in the Sanders bill for new funding for innovative senior centers based on the model developed in New York City. (See attached 2 page concept paper on “charter senior**

centers” which is the basis for the NYC innovative senior centers). <http://cscs-ny.org/files/chartersconcept.pdf>

5. **Interstate funding formula issues: We are asking for Senator Gillibrand to remain vigilant on the interstate funding formula** to ensure NY does not fall further behind in getting its fair share of this critical funding for older New Yorkers. Additionally, any changes that can be made to the formula that would bring NY its fair share is encouraged.

History of the interstate funding formula changes: The last reauthorization of the OAA finally culminated in the 2006 amendments after many years of contentious issues being raised in Congress. States experiencing a greater growth in their 60+ population believed that they were not getting their fair share of OAA Title III-B and C funds. The funding formula disagreement held up OAA reauthorization for many years. A compromise was reached which was intended to direct additional OAA funds to “growth states” while protecting other states. In essence, OAA funds were driven away from the Northeast and the Midwest rust belt to the South, Southwest, and West Coast states. States to look out for possibly advocating for further changes to the funding formula that could hurt New York include California, Florida and New Mexico among others. **According to the NY State Office for the Aging, since 2000, NY state has received only \$5 million in new funds through the Older Americans Act. During that time, the state has increased its funding for aging services by \$44 million. OAA’s interstate funding formula and the need to substantially increase funding for the Act has lagged seriously behind the needs of older New Yorkers.**

OAA is egregiously underfunded having been neglected for decades. In essence, this became a “national food fight”. **So-called growth states (growth by percentage not hard numbers) fought to take Title III-C nutrition and Title III-B supportive services dollars from older New Yorkers in non-growth states. NY state has the third highest 60+ population in the nation, 3.5 million (and 2.5 million caregivers). The NY State Office for the Aging projects that 52 out of 59 counties in NY will have populations of 20% or more seniors by 2015. It is clearly inappropriate public policy to remove funds from such a populous state. Additionally, NYC taxpayers already send billions of dollars more to Washington than we receive back.**

New York and Massachusetts, standing to lose much money, waged the largest opposition. *CSCS worked closely with the NY State Office for the Aging and NY’s congressional delegation to oppose funding formula changes that hurt NY’s older adult population and the aging services network.* Two criteria were added to the OAA interstate funding formula to lessen the loss of funding: hold harmless and guaranteed growth.

Hold harmless: This guaranteed that no state would receive less than the amount they received in FY2006 for Titles III- B, C, and D. This does not affect Title III-E, the National Caregiver Support Program enacted under the Clinton administration, which uses a per capita formula based on a state’s population size.

Guaranteed growth: This provision was included to protect “non-growth” states. NY and Massachusetts were successful in winning this provision in 2000. This resulted in assisting states like NY that were considered “out of parity” (ie, getting more than our “fair share” of OAA funds) having a measure of protection. The guaranteed growth provision allowed “non-growth” states to get 20% of what they would have normally been entitled to with new Title III funds so they’d always get something. By 2006, a lot of states reached parity, but not NY. **The 2006 amendments retained the hold harmless, but eliminated the guaranteed growth. Therefore, if a state, like NY, is not at parity, it will receive no new Title III funds. We are still a distance from parity for congregate meals.** Kansas, Assistant Secretary of Aging’s Kathy Greenlee’s home state, was in the same situation as NY in 2006.

Concern has been raised, that with the impending 2012 reauthorization, the so-called “growth states” will attempt to eliminate the hold harmless provision, the last measure of protection to NY’s OAA Title III funding. If the hold harmless provision is removed, in FFY12, NY state will lose Title III funds, ie – our base funding will diminish as it flows to other states.

- 6. Empower and Protect Older Adults:** Improve education and training in best practices for advocacy and consumer empowerment, integrate various existing advocacy provisions, support independence to promote systems and policy change, and enhance accountability at all levels.
(<http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/older-americans-act/strengthening-the-voice-of.html>)
- 7. Enhance the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP):** Promote flexibility in eligibility requirements and service options and test innovations such as sector strategies for job creation for older adults to address employment and training needs in the current economy. Allow seniors to remain longer on job locations. SCSEP is the nation’s only jobs program specifically designed for seniors and has a long, successful history of job training and placement for those in need. CSCS supports President Obama’s recommendation to transfer Title V to AOA. This move could place greater emphasis on community service and employment opportunities within the aging network, in keeping with the program’s original intent.
- 8. Elder abuse services:** As the elderly population grows rapidly, so will elder abuse. It is imperative that elder abuse services be better integrated within OAA-funded programs.
- 9. Redefining “greatest social need” in community planning grants:** CSCS supports the inclusion of LGBT and HIV positive elders and those with Alzheimer’s in the definition of greatest social need as proposed in the Sanders bill. We further recommend that those with breast cancer be included as this disease impacts thousands of older women every year.

10. Advance Evidence-Based Healthy Aging Initiatives:

- a.** Imbed the key principles, standards and lessons learned from AoA's Evidence-Based Disease and Disability Prevention Program in the core services of OAA under Title III-D.
- b.** Create a robust aging services research and development authority in the Act to evaluate and improve measurement of current services and support development of evidence-based innovations.

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