



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

January 29, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

As you continue your work to develop ideas for the Senate job creation bills focused on both short-term and long-term employment goals, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which represents the 629 Area Agencies on Aging and 244 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S, would like to reinforce the importance of taking steps to help create new jobs and stimulate the economy while helping our nation prepare for the largest population of older adults in its history.

As articulated in our November 24 letter of last year, n4a encourages you to include provisions that reflect our national workforce priorities, specifically, our strategic interest in growing *jobs in the provision of health and long-term services and supports*.

While we realize you are dealing with many competing priorities that deserve attention in the Senate job creation package, we urge you to focus provisions in the bills on the following four areas that will promote sustainable job creation to address the needs of our nation's aging population:

- 1) **Eldercare workers** to carry out critical Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-B supportive services and III-C nutrition programs;
- 2) **Drivers and mobility management staff** in the Federal Transit Administration's elderly and disabled formula grant program (Sec. 5310);
- 3) **Service coordinators** and providers for Section 202 low-income senior housing programs; and
- 4) **Planners** to carry out comprehensive planning and coordination activities, and develop long-range plans to prepare for the aging of communities and promote more livable communities for all ages (as directed under the OAA Sec. 306).

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

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The employment provisions through these existing programs would be especially directed towards hiring new staff and professionals or retaining staff whose jobs are otherwise at risk given budget cuts, and state and local agency recipients would be allowed some flexibility in devoting a portion of the funds to training, retention and career development activities.

By stimulating jobs in the health care and long-term services and supports fields now, the country would not only move toward a sustainable system to support the aging of the boomers, but would also temporarily and permanently assist millions of Americans to obtain jobs in sustainable and much-needed fields. Data show these workers will remain in demand for years to come as the need for health and aging services only grows as our population ages.¹

Investing more in the federal programs that fund these critical initiatives at the community level will spur job growth and stimulate local economies as these programs depend heavily on the private sector, small business and nonprofit communities to provide services and supports. In short, Congress has a tremendous opportunity in the coming months to attend to this national priority.

Thank you for considering these recommended strategies to create new jobs to stimulate the economy while strategically strengthening our nation's health and long-term services and supports infrastructure, thereby protecting the millions of older Americans and persons with disabilities who rely on these workers and the safety net supports they provide. We look forward to working with you as this legislation progresses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy Markwood".

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Richard Durbin
The Honorable Bryon Dorgan
The White House Office of Public Engagement

¹ Institute of Medicine, "Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce," April 14, 2008.