



Association on Aging in New York

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Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand,

On October 30, the Senate HELP Committee will mark up [S. 1562, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2013](#). While we recognize that you do not sit on the HELP Committee, our Association urges you to show your support for the bill, which is a consensus proposal crafted after several weeks of negotiations. I know you understand what our seniors are facing when it comes to the economics of growing old. The Older Americans Act (OAA) is critically important to New York seniors, as it creates and funds the vital home and community-based services that help older Americans live with maximum health, independence and dignity. The OAA helps low-income seniors who are not eligible for similar services under Medicaid.

The Association on Aging in New York, representing the [59 local offices for the aging](#), supports S. 1562, along with colleagues in our state such as the Council of Senior Centers and Services of New York City, as well as national organizations like the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging ([view n4a support letter](#)) and the National Council on Aging ([view NCOA support letter](#)). We are so pleased the bill has bipartisan support and ask you to press your colleagues on the HELP Committee to vote **in favor of S. 1562, without amendments**. Amendments to a bill that has already garnered bi-partisan support could derail the process by shifting the debate to contentious issues (such as funding formula changes that would negatively affect many states, including New York), rather than focusing on the positive common core of the OAA.

OAA funding is more important than ever. The State's 60-plus population increased almost 15% between 2000 and 2010 and, as you know, the 60-plus population is projected to increase exponentially in coming years. Our Association has prepared detailed charts showing the demographic changes in all of the [27 Congressional Districts in New York](#), as well as a document describing OAA services in New York and outlining reasons to [reauthorize the OAA](#).

The Older Americans Act is essential in every corner of New York State. While Area Agency on Aging services at the local level are funded by a variety of sources, including state and local funds, the OAA provides one-third of the total funds, so it's an integral part of the service delivery system:

- Title III B provides 180,000 older New Yorkers with transportation to and from doctor appointments, the supermarket, and the local senior center for socialization.
- Title III C-1 and C-2 provide 185,000 older New Yorkers with home delivered and congregate meals.
- Title III E serves 23,000 older New Yorkers, the majority of them 75 years of age and older, with personal care assistance, social adult day services and personal emergency response systems.

Every county but one has experienced an increase in the 60-plus population, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. While some seniors receive more than one OAA-funded service, all together the OAA provides services to almost 400,000 older New Yorkers. Most are over the age of 75 and in many cases live alone or are frail or disabled, all risk factors for more expensive levels of care.

From rural to urban and suburban, offices for aging are experiencing unprecedented demand, here's a couple of specific examples:

- In the small rural county of [Chautauqua](#), 23% of the population of 134,000 people is made up of seniors. The Chautauqua County Office for the Aging, which depends on OAA funding, has 350 people waiting for in-home assistance like a personal care aide, 177 people waiting for emergency home repairs and safety/access adaptations like ramps and safety rails for their bathrooms and 40 people waiting for home delivered meals. The local meals on wheels has always done funding raising to help make up for federal and state funding that has been cut back over the last few years, but sequestration struck a blow they were not expecting and they've been unable to make up the difference. The result: for the first time in history, Chautauqua has a waiting list for home delivered meals.
- Meanwhile, in [Suffolk](#) County on Long Island, where 19% of the population is eligible for services under the Older Americans Act, 400 residents are waiting for home delivered meals, while more than 500 are waiting for case management services. Home delivered meals, congregate meal programs, caregiver support programs, home care, case management and legal assistance are just some of the programs that assist vulnerable older New Yorkers to age in place rather than in nursing homes.

After years of cuts at the local level and flat federal funding that hasn't kept pace with the growing older population – and sequestration – we can't wait any longer for the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Show your support before the bill comes to a vote. Demonstrate that Congress can work in a bi-partisan manner and show your constituents – seniors matter!

Sincerely,



Laura A. Cameron
Executive Director, Association on Aging in New York