

Eldercare Workforce Alliance
Outside Witness Testimony - Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations
Subcommittee Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

May 31, 2017

Written Testimony Regarding Funding Requests for Eldercare Workforce Programs
of the Department of Health and Human Services; Health Resources and Services
Administration, Administration for Community Living, National Institute on Aging

Submitted on behalf of the
Eldercare Workforce Alliance
2519 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
202-505-4816
ayork@eldercareworkforce.org

By

Nancy Lundebjerg, MPA
Alliance Co-Convener

Michèle Saunders, DMD, MS, MPH
Alliance Co-Convener

Mr. Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We write on behalf of the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA), a coalition of 31 national organizations - representing health care professionals, family caregivers, consumers, direct care workers, and providers – joined together to address the health care workforce needs in caring for an aging America. As the Subcommittee begins consideration of funding for programs in FY 2018, the Alliance urges you to provide adequate funding for programs designed to increase the number of health care professionals prepared to care for America’s growing population of older adults and to support family caregivers in the essential role they play in this regard. **We urge you to support a total \$51 million in funding for geriatrics programs in Title VII and Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); \$187.5 million in funding for programs administered by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) that support the vital role of family caregivers in providing care for older adults; and \$1.7 billion to support the research efforts of the National Institute on Aging (NIA).**

The number of Americans over age 65 is expected to double between 2000 and 2030, totaling more than 70 million people and accounting for almost 20% of the American population by the end of the next decade. Today's health care workforce is inadequate to meet the special needs of older Americans, many of whom have multiple chronic physical and mental health conditions and cognitive impairments. Of equal importance is supporting the legions of family caregivers who annually provide billions of hours of uncompensated care that allows older adults to remain in their homes and communities. Without a

national commitment to expand training and educational opportunities, the workforce will continue to grow even more constrained and care for our nation's older adults will be compromised. This is why the Title VII and VIII geriatrics programs, ACL programs that support family caregivers, and the research efforts of the National Institute on Aging are so critical to ensuring there are skilled eldercare workers and well-supported family caregivers available to meet the complex and unique needs of older adults.

EWA specifically requests the following levels of funding:

Title VII and VIII Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program¹: Request: \$51 Million

The Title VII and VIII Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) is the only federal program that aims to develop a health care workforce that maximizes patient and family engagement while improving health outcomes for older adults. It equips the primary care workforce with the knowledge and skills to care for older adults and builds community networks to address gaps in health care through individual, system, community, and population level change. In July 2015, HRSA announced 44 three-year grant funded programs located in 29 states. Specifically, the program:

- Integrates geriatrics and primary care to transform clinical training environments to provide more coordinated and comprehensive care
- Develops providers who can assess and address the needs of older adults and their families/caregivers
- Creates and delivers community-based programs that provide patients, families, and caregivers with the knowledge and skills to improve health outcomes and the quality of care for older adults
- Provides Alzheimer's disease and related dementia education to families, caregivers, direct care workers, and health professions students, faculty, and providers

In academic year 2015-16, GWEP grantees provided training for nearly 18,500 students and fellows. In addition, more than 104,000 faculty and practicing professionals participated in 1,173 unique continuing education courses offered by GWEP grantees.

EWA is particularly concerned that President Trump's FY18 budget proposal calls for elimination of this program, along with the other Title VII and VIII health professions and nursing health workforce training programs. As the baby boomers reach retirement age and life expectancy increases, now is a critical time to expand, not limit, investments in the primary care workforce and family caregivers that we rely on to provide high quality care to older Americans.

To that end, for FY2018, the first year of the new grant cycle, EWA requests increased funding to close current geographic and demographic gaps in geriatrics workforce training. Specifically, the increased funding could launch at least eight new GWEP centers, targeted to underserved and rural communities, and provide \$100,000 to each GWEP site to reestablish the Geriatrics Academic Career Award program.

¹ In December 2014, HRSA combined the existing Title VIII Comprehensive Geriatric Education Program and the Title VII Geriatric Academic Career Award, Geriatric Education Centers, and Geriatric Training for Physicians, Dentists and Behavioral and Mental Health Providers programs into the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program. The FY 2016 Omnibus also consolidated these programs, citing HRSA's combined competition for the program.

Administration for Community Living Family Caregiver Support Programs: Appropriations
Request: \$187.5 million

These programs support caregivers, elders, and people with disabilities by providing critical respite care and other support services for family caregivers, training and recruitment of care workers and volunteers, information and outreach, counseling, and other supplemental services.

- **Family Caregiver Support Services: EWA Requests \$158.5.** This program provides a range of support services for family and other unpaid caregivers including counseling, respite care, training, and assistance with locating the services that help family caregivers care for their loved ones at home for as long as possible. In FY15, the program provided more 116,000 caregivers with counseling and training services, provided 67,000 family caregivers with 6.2 million hours of respite care, and provided nearly 1.2 million contacts to caregivers assisting them in locating services from a variety of public and private agencies. However, in FY14, more than 1 in 3 family caregivers still experienced trouble accessing services so additional funding would go a long way in ensuring families can access the support they need.
- **Native American Caregiver Support: EWA Requests \$8 million.** This program provides grants to eligible tribal organizations to provide support for family and informal caregivers of Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian elders. It offers information and outreach, access assistance, individual counseling, support groups and training, respite care and other supplemental services. In FY15, more 750,000 caregivers were served through this program.
- **Alzheimer's Disease Support Services and Specialized Supportive Services: EWA Requests \$5 million for the Alzheimer's Disease Support Services Program and \$11 million for the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative - Specialized Supportive Services.** A critical focus of these programs is to support the family caregivers who provide countless hours of unpaid care, thereby enabling their family members with dementia to continue living in the community. Funds will go to evidence-based interventions and expanding the dementia-capable home and community-based services, enabling additional older adults to live in their residence of choice. The programs provided direct services to more than 61,000 individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their family caregivers in FY16.
- **Lifespan Respite Care: EWA Requests \$5 million.** This program funds grants to improve the quality of and access to respite care for family caregivers of children or adults of any age with special needs. In FY16, 36 states participated in the program.

National Institute on Aging: EWA Request: \$1.7 billion

The National Institute on Aging, one of the 27 Institutes and Centers of the National Institutes of Health, leads a broad scientific effort to understand the nature of aging in order to promote the health and well-being of older adults. Funding will aid in researching training initiatives for the workforce that cares for older adults and research on physician-family communication during end-of-life and critical care. In addition, the NIA coordinates the Older Americans Independence Centers Program, which aims to increase scientific knowledge leading to better ways to maintain or restore independence in older persons. The NIA also supports on-going projects that improve patient-level health outcomes for individuals with three or more chronic health conditions.

The Eldercare Workforce Alliance commends you on your past support for geriatrics workforce programs and asks that you join us in supporting the eldercare workforce at this critical time – for all older Americans deserve quality care, now and in the future. Thank you for your consideration.