



You can make a difference. Donate! PayPal

NOW

Your Update from AgeOptions

May 2018

Again, Time to Start Planning and Advocating for Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act

*By Jonathan Lavin
AgeOptions President and CEO*

I attended the annual National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) Policy Briefing and Capitol Hill Day April 18 and 19 in Washington, D.C. As usual the topics were current, challenging and important to aging services in Illinois.

Most of the Washington attention was on the remarkable budget agreement between Congressional leaders and the White House. Domestic programs received significant increases under the legislation and new initiatives were included in the bill as well. One important component of the legislation was the establishment of the Chronic Care Act which will permit, among other changes, Advantage Plans (i.e. Managed Care Plans that are options to fee for service Medicare) to provide and charge Medicare for a number of supportive services for members, including transportation, meals, home care aids, grocery delivery, etc. These options will probably not be provided until 2020.

The significant funding increases for nutrition, supportive services and caregiver support, retention of the SHIP program with actual increased funding, and other elements may offer enough resources to avoid the Older Americans Act reauthorization plan to reduce hold harmless states by up to two percent each year. The Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Community Living are apportioning the increases and applying funding formulas at this time. When released, the Department on Aging will confirm if the cuts that include Illinois will take place this year.

The OAA funding formula, when sequestration was implemented in 2013, resulted in the largest cuts in funding to the highest growth states (those with the greatest increase in numbers of older persons). The Older Americans Act legislation was reauthorized for only three years with 2019 the third year to begin correcting the above injustice.

One question to be answered in the next 18 months is if this landmark legislation should be updated to the 21st Century. This could mean that a reexamination of the nutrition program components, greater attention on isolation and loneliness, efforts to prevent scams against older persons, support for grandparents who are the primary parent figure for children, new approaches to mobility assistance and transportation, health promotion/disease prevention, the impact of technology on services, isolation of older persons, etc., may be considered in a new light.

The recently enacted RAISE Act will also offer recommendations on how caregivers should be supported into the future with the National Family Caregiver Support Act within the Older Americans Act, a natural place to start in offering support to family, friends and unpaid caregivers. Nationally, according the National Family Caregiver Alliance, family caregiving is estimated to provide \$450 billion of uncompensated care each year.

In the next year, recommendations for improving the Older Americans Act will be collected by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Please consider participating in the AgeOptions Winter Legislative Breakfasts to begin offering ideas for the next reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

We invite you to participate by joining the AgeOptions Advocacy Task Force. The goal of the Task Force is to strategize to improve benefits, services and programs for older persons. It meets regularly, usually via conference call, to educate participants and members of the AgeOptions Advisory Council, Board of Directors and Senior Service Network about issues at all levels of government affecting older adults. [Please click here to join:](#)