

# 2021 POLICY PRIORITIES

## ABOUT LEADINGAGE

- We are the largest association of mission-driven aging services organizations.
- We represent over 5,000 organizations serving millions of older adults and families across the continuum of aging services.
- We work with practitioners and policy makers to create innovative solutions for our members' challenges and are committed to developing new ways to improve operations and quality of service.
- We strive to be the trusted voice for aging and envision an America freed from ageism. We are committed to equitable access to care for all who need it.
- We are a catalyst for innovation, providing creative approaches for new and needed services and supports for older adults and others needing care.

## LEADINGAGE ADVOCACY

**LeadingAge's advocacy strives to make America a better place to grow old.**

We promote diversity, equity, and inclusion and a vision of aging services staff and care recipients that reflects all of America. Our advocacy is nonpartisan, data-grounded, and guided by the on-the-ground experience of our members. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the myriad challenges of providing long-term services and supports (LTSS) to a rapidly aging population. The virus continues to wreak havoc on people around the country and devastate the lives of millions, disproportionately impacting persons of color, particularly those living with Alzheimer's and related dementias.

Our resolve to enact meaningful long-term care policies that promote equity in access to good care for all, not just those who can afford it or those who spend their last dollar buying help, is stronger than ever. One of LeadingAge's most essential messages is that Congress must address the critical need to create an equitable, federal approach to paying for LTSS across the continuum of care.



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### Aging Services Workforce

We support legislation that addresses the workforce crisis with solutions that help to recruit, train and retrain new workers in our field. We also support programs that will increase pay for direct care workers to at least a living wage. We recommend programs to professionalize the workforce with competency-based training requirements, increased and appropriate training requirements, and offer career pathways to advancement opportunities. We also support grants, tuition assistance, and other incentives to recruit and retain workers of all levels in aging services.

We support the development of a legislative proposal for a guest worker program in aging services. It must include limits on the amount of time guest workers could remain in the U.S., direct responsibility of employers for guest workers they sponsor, and guardrails protecting guest workers from exploitation. We also support expansion of existing programs that bring more physicians and nurses into the country to focus on aging services.

### Nursing Homes

We support new legislation that modernizes and improves nursing homes so that they can adapt to and flourish in the post-COVID era including:

- Fostering person-centered high quality care in nursing homes and promoting evidence-based outcomes and collaborative approaches to achieve transformational change in enforcement.
- Addressing the critical need to expand how individuals pay for and receive long-term services and supports.
- Providing infrastructure relief to address the ongoing and future impact of the pandemic on the ability of nursing homes to provide a high-quality living environment.

We also support reintroducing these bills:

- H.R. 4468 (Nursing Home Workforce Quality Act) and S. 2993 (Ensuring Seniors' Access to Quality Care Act) so that nursing assistants can complete their training on-site rather than having to find nurse aid training programs in their community.
- H.R. 1682 and S. 753 (Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act of 2019) so that all the nights a Medicare beneficiary stays in the hospital count toward the three-day minimum required for Medicare nursing home coverage.

### Affordable Senior Housing

We support funding for more affordable senior housing and the need for this housing to be linked to services and service coordination. The availability of affordable housing for older adults with low incomes far outpaces existing supply and waiting lists for housing programs are often several years long.

#### Housing Infrastructure Priorities:

- At least \$2.5 billion for 27,000 new Section 202 Housing for the Elderly homes.
- More Service Coordinators. Invest \$1 billion for 3,867 three-year Service Coordinator contracts for the HUD-assisted senior communities currently without one.
- Enactment of the Broadband Justice Act (HR 1904) for internet in every federally-subsidized home.
- A \$1 billion capital pool for an Age Friendly Retrofit Program.

#### Fiscal Year 2022 HUD Funding Priorities:

- \$600M for approximately 6,700 new Section 202 Housing for the Elderly homes. Requiring leverage with other sources of private capital, HUD has significantly reduced the reliance on federal investment for the development of these properties (\$88,000 per unit today compared to \$156,000 per unit in 2012).
- \$100 million for 400 new three-year service coordinator grants. Today, only 45% of Section 202 homes have a service coordinator.
- \$100 million for the installation in service fees for building-wide internet in 3,300 senior housing communities.
- Full renewal funding for rental assistance contract renewals (Project-Based Rental Assistance and Project Rental Assistance Contracts) and service coordinator grant renewals.

#### Low Income Housing Tax Credits Priorities:

- Expand and improve the Housing Credit program to house more older adults and protect nonprofit ownership of Housing Credit communities.

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### Care in the Home and Community

We support policies that recognize the importance of care in the home and community. Organizations need to be reimbursed adequately and regulated appropriately for their capabilities to coordinate and collaborate with other health and support providers, ensuring that the person receives appropriate, high-quality care regardless of the setting or location.

#### Home Health Priorities:

- Ensure appropriate reimbursement methodology and rates for home care and home health services across payers and advocate for reasonable home health and home care regulations to allow for the continuation and expansion of high-quality, community-based care without unnecessary burdens.
- Expand the home health benefit to be inclusive of more personal care, technology, and other necessary services to provide a higher level of care in the home for those who want it.
- Maintain COVID-19 telehealth flexibilities into the future and expand them to include appropriate reimbursement for Medicare home health.

#### Hospice Priorities:

- Support hospice providers through reimbursement, regulatory changes, and benefit adjustments to be able to provide high quality serious illness care prior to hospice eligibility and maintain access to the existing hospice benefit
- Improve patient and family caregiver support by including an in-home respite level of care in hospice
- Establish pilots that allow for community based advanced illness services to provide an extra layer for support to patients with serious illness prior to hospice eligibility.
- Maintain COVID-19 telehealth flexibilities into the future including allowing technology enabled hospice face to face recertifications to continue.

#### Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Priorities:

- Support S. 150 and H.R. 2166, bipartisan legislation that would allow PACE organizations to make risk adjustment submissions for participants based on audio-only telehealth visits.
- Increase the PACE model's availability to older adults regardless of where they live through regulatory and statutory flexibility and investment from Medicare and Medicaid.
- Promote and include PACE organizations in any long-term services and supports (LTSS) financing or delivery reform effort and in innovation models at the federal and state levels.

#### Adult Day Services Priorities:

- Expand access to and eligibility for Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) like adult day services through reforms to LTSS financing and benefit design, ensuring appropriate provider reimbursement, and promoting consumer choice in care options.
- Leverage infrastructure legislation to invest in programs to design, revamp, and build accessible physical spaces, such as day centers used for adult day services, PACE organizations and senior centers, that support home and community-based care.
- Promote the role of adult day and other HCBS providers in aging services delivery through increased access to non-Medicaid coverage and inclusion of HCBS in innovation models and demonstrations.