



November 3, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer,

I write to you today during the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of negotiations around the Build Back Better Act to ask that older adults' needs be addressed to the absolute greatest extent possible in this historic package.

We urge you to protect the bill's existing investments for older adults for Home and Community Based Services and workforce investment and also to expand the bill's funding for HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program. How well the bill funds these three critical, and connected, investments will directly impact how well the nation is able to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's older Americans.

On behalf of older adults and the aging services providers who serve them, Congress must:

- **Increase to at least \$1 billion, the bill's current \$500 million for HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly funding program.**

Given the severe current shortage of services-connected affordable senior housing, it is difficult to think the goals of increased Home and Community Based Services and Money Follows the Person investments, will be realized. For the lowest income older adults, there simply is no where affordable to live in communities. Without a greater investment in HUD's Section 202 program, low income older adults will continue to languish on the growing waiting lists for service-connected, affordable housing.

The Section 202 program is targeted to 62+ households with very low incomes, defined as incomes below 50% of the area median. In practice, Section 202 households have average annual incomes of \$14,109. As in most other HUD programs, residents pay 30% of their adjusted incomes for rent. This keeps the housing affordable for each individual household, even if incomes fluctuate. Today, 17% of Section 202 residents are 80+ and, 49% of Section 202 households are non-white, two characteristics that make Section 202 residents at greater risk from COVID-19.

About half of all Section 202 communities, and all new Section 202 communities, have a Service Coordinator on-site. Research has found Service Coordinators lower hospital use, increase higher value health care use (e.g. primary care), have success reaching high-risk populations, and result fewer nursing home transfers.

- **Preserve or increase the bill's \$150 billion for Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS).**

Older adults must be able to get the help they need to age in place wherever they call home. This minimum investment will help ensure access to services as well as bolster wages of the direct care professionals (primarily of low income women of color), who deliver that care.

- **Preserve or increase the bill's key workforce investments:**
  - \$1.6 billion for Nursing Home Workforce Training Grants.
  - \$1 billion for grants to support the Direct Care Workforce.
  - \$425 million to expand the Health Profession Opportunity Grants.
  - \$20 million for Technical Assistance Center for Supporting Direct Care and Caregiving.
  - \$40 million in Funding to Support Unpaid Caregivers Behavioral Health Needs.
  - \$30 million in funding for Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training.
  - \$20 million for Hospice and Palliative Nursing.
  - \$350 million for individuals to carry out nontraditional apprenticeship programs.

LeadingAge represents more than 5,000 nonprofit aging services providers, including affordable senior housing providers and other mission-minded organizations that touch millions of lives every day. Alongside our members and 38 state partners, we use applied research, advocacy, education, and community-building to make America a better place to grow old. Our membership encompasses the continuum of services for people as they age.

We are grateful for the bill's funding for affordable housing, Home and Community Based Services, and for workforce supports. These are critically needed resources that will immediately help alleviate current shortages and scarcity of supports. We simply hope that the final bill goes as far as it possibly can to ensure as many older adults receive the services and supports we need as we age.

Thank you for your leadership to make historic, structural investments for older adults and aging services providers in the Build Back Better legislation.

Sincerely,



Katie Smith Sloan  
President and CEO