

# 2022 POLICY PRIORITIES

## ABOUT LEADINGAGE

- We represent more than 5,000 mission-driven organizations who serve millions of older adults and families across the aging services continuum.
- We are the trusted voice for aging and envision an America freed from ageism.
- We are a catalyst for innovation and work with practitioners and policymakers to develop new ways to improve operations and quality of service.
- We are steadfast in our efforts to build an equitable and inclusive aging services community.

## 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 experience of our members. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has a disproportionate impact on persons of color, reinforced the myriad challenges of providing long-term services and supports to a rapidly aging population. The virus continues to wreak havoc on people around the country and devastate the lives of millions.

Our resolve to enact meaningful long-term care policies that promote equity in access to quality care for all, not just those who can afford it or those who spend their last dollar buying help, is stronger than ever.

### Aging Services Workforce

The crisis in recruiting and retaining frontline and professional aging services workers is not new, but the pandemic made it even more essential that policymakers create and fund programs that recruit, train, and retrain workers in our field. To do this, providers must be funded adequately to 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 training requirements, and offer career pathways to advancement opportunities.

We support immigration solutions that ensure there will be enough qualified individuals in the United States to fill all the vacant and future positions in aging services. We seek legislative action to establish and fund a guest worker program in aging services, with sufficient protections for guest workers. We also support proposals that provide undocumented essential workers with a path to citizenship and permanent status, and opportunities to make unused immigrant visas available to nurses and physicians.

We support these bills:

- **Direct CARE Opportunity Act (H.R. 2999) and the Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act (S. 2344)**, which authorizes \$1 billion in supporting competitive grants to recruit, retain, and increase wages for the direct care workforce.
- **Citizenship for Essential Workers Act (S. 747, H.R. 1909)**, which establishes a mechanism for essential workers that includes HCBS and direct care workers who were designated as essential workers during the COVID-19 public health emergency, to obtain a pathway to citizenship and permanent resident status.

- **Health Care Workforce Resilience Act (S. 1024, H.R. 2255)**, which makes previously unused immigrant visas available to nurses and physicians and provides a pathway to citizenship.

### Nursing Homes

President Biden’s initiative to Improve the Safety and Quality of Nursing Homes brings opportunities and challenges and we urge bold movement to ensure access to consistently high-quality nursing home care for older Americans and families across the country. We support new legislation that modernizes and improves nursing homes so that they can adapt to and flourish in the post-COVID era. Fostering high-quality care in nursing homes and promoting evidence-based outcomes and collaborative approaches to achieve transformational change in enforcement is critical. We must address the critical need to expand how individuals pay for and receive long-term services and supports.

We support reintroduction of these bills:

- **Nursing Home Workforce Quality Act (H.R. 4468) and Ensuring Seniors’ Access to Quality Care Act (S. 2993)** which allows nursing assistants to complete their training on-site rather than having to find nurse aide training programs in their community.
- **Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act (H.R. 1682, S. 753)** 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

The shortage of affordable housing damages peoples’ ability to age with dignity, choice, and independence. More than 2.2 million very low income older adult renters spend more than half of their incomes for housing, a number that’s grown 68% since 2009. Waiting lists for affordable senior housing are often several years long, stifling efforts to prevent and end the steep rise of homelessness among older adults.

#### Fiscal Year 2023 HUD Funding Priorities:

- **Expand the Supply of Housing:** Congress should include an additional \$600 million for approximately 6,200 new Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly homes.

- **Fund More Service Coordinators:** Provide \$100 million for 400 new, three-year Service Coordinator grants and \$30 million for new budget-based Service Coordinators.
- **Renew, Preserve, and Improve Housing Infrastructure:** Full renewal funding for Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance, Section 202 Project Rental Assistance Contracts, and Service Coordinator grants; \$6 million to ensure successful RAD for PRAC conversions; connect HUD multifamily homes to the internet.

**Low Income Housing Tax Credit Priorities:** Congress should pass the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act to expand and improve the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and protect nonprofit ownership.

**Support Significant New Housing Investment:** Congress needs to invest at least \$2.5 billion for approximately 26,000 new Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly homes.

### Care in the Home and Community

We support policies that recognize that whenever possible, individuals choose to receive services at home, in the community. To support individual choice, community based organizations must be reimbursed adequately and regulated appropriately, ensuring that beneficiaries receive appropriate, high-quality care regardless of the setting or location.

We support these bills:

- **The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA) (S. 2080, H.R. 647)**, which would allow more training of specialized workers to support people with serious illness. Money for the hospice and palliative care workforce was included in the Build Back Better Act as well (90 million dollars).
- **HCBS funding included in Build Back Better:** The Build Back Better Act that passed the House had \$150 billion dollars to expand home and community based services in states. States would receive a financial incentive to improve the quality of and increase access to HCBS. We support the inclusion of this enhanced HCBS funding in future vehicles.
- **The Choose Home Care Act of 2021 (S.2562, H.R. 5541)** that would expand the current home health benefit to respond to older adults who want to be served at home.