



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

July 2, 2009

The Honorable Dave Obey,
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Service, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiaht,
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Service, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiaht:

We, the undersigned, are members of the nation's leading coalition of organizations serving older Americans—the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO). Together, we successfully advocate for and represent the unique interests and needs of America's older adults. LCAO members touch more than 134 million Americans through service provision and advocacy.

Today, we respectfully request your support for the President's budget request for Geriatric Education Centers (GECs) under the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Title VII, Section 753, of the Public Health Service Act at a level of \$41.997 million for FY2010. Geriatric Education Centers and their related programs, the Geriatric Academic Career Awards and the Geriatric Faculty Fellowships, provide much needed interdisciplinary geriatric and gerontology training to a broad range of health professionals who serve our rapidly growing aging population.

The fundamental goal of the HRSA geriatric education programs is to train the physicians, dentists, psychiatrists, social workers, gerontologists, and other health care professionals to become the academicians who teach our future geriatricians. As you know, the pool of health care professionals trained to treat and care for our nation's elderly population is dangerously low.

Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce, released by the Institute of Medicine in April, 2008, clearly signals that much more must be done to ensure a health care workforce prepared to provide comprehensive, competent and cost-effective care to our aging population. The report calls for increased recruitment and training of geriatric specialists and geriatric academicians, specifically citing the Geriatric Academic Career Award program.

The hallmarks of the geriatric education programs are the promotion of interdisciplinary, coordinated, integrated, culturally effective care, based on disease prevention and chronic disease management, with an emergency preparedness component. This approach reflects the new model of health care that must be broad-based and reach every community in America. The Title VII geriatric education programs are one component of a comprehensive strategy to meet the challenge of successfully reforming our nation's health care system.

The education, training, and support provided by the GECs, the geriatric awards, and the fellowships have improved the clinical competency of health care providers and facilitated access to quality geriatric care in many communities across the country. Older adults, caregivers, and health care professionals continue to benefit from the outcomes of these geriatric training programs.

Given the critical shortage of adequately trained health care providers in geriatrics and the rapidly increasing numbers of older adults in our population, it is clear that the \$41.997 million funding level for these Title VII programs is sorely needed. Please support this funding amount requested in the President's FY 2010 budget.

Please feel free to contact us if we may provide further information or assistance.

Sincerely,

AFSCME Retirees
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer's Association
American Association for International Aging
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Geriatrics Society
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges
Association of Belltel Retirees, Inc.
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Easter Seals
Gray Panthers
Lutheran Services of America
Military Officers Association of America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association For Hispanic Elderly
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Indian Council on Aging
National Senior Citizens Law Center
NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
The Gerontological Society of America