



# Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

July 2, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin,  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Service, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran,  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Service, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

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