



Dane County Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging of Dane County

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Dear **[Representative or Senator NAME]**:

On behalf of the Area Agency on Aging of Dane County WI, I am writing to you to share the significance of providing older adults the ability to age well at home and safely in the community.

The programs and services Dane County, along with 613 other Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are able to provide, are made possible by the Older Americans Act (OAA). In Dane County, these programs allow us to serve more than 117,000 older Americans and their caregivers.

However, a draft budget proposal for the federal Health and Human Services agency proposes to split OAA programs into two different HHS agencies, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The OAA, which turns 60 this year, has been a successful approach as it provides services under one delivery system under the Aging Network. This network, which is led at the federal, state, and local levels, has been highly effective because of its cohesive structure offering essential services such as healthy aging, in-home support, transportation, nutrition, case management, social engagement, caregiver support, and more.

Secondly, the budget draft also outlined plans to eliminate aging programs that support the older adults in Dane County such as OAA's evidence-based health promotion, falls prevention, and disease prevention programs (Title III D) and elder rights (Title VII) efforts to prevent elder abuse and neglect, among others. Falls are the leading cause of emergency room visits for older adults in Dane County. The ability to provide falls prevention education is critical to reducing these emergencies and the higher medical costs associated with them. Scams are repeatedly targeted to our older adults, leading to financial losses in excess of \$30 million dollars to Wisconsin older adults. Financial abuse of older adults in Dane County now exceeds physical abuse and neglect as the most reported and founded type of abuse last year. The ability of Adult Protective Services to investigate abuse of all forms is critical to protecting our most vulnerable older adults.

The proposed breakup of these programs and the elimination of the aforementioned initiatives in the OAA would mean more than 6,000 older adults in Dane County would lose access to the in-home services and supports they need to remain living safely at home and in the community. Without these services, they would need nursing home level of care in institutions, totaling more than \$2.2 million dollars per year.

Other services that are proposed to be unfunded are the State Health Insurance & Assistance Programs (SHIP's), Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC's), Low-income Heating Assistance Programs, Life Span Respite Care, and Social Services Block Grants. Without these programs and funding, older adults and their families will not have access to information, short periods of relief from family caregiving, heat, or abuse investigators and protections to ensure they are safe. In short, these services target our lowest income, most frail and vulnerable older adults.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about how the programs currently provided under the OAA to our older adults and other how elimination of other funding sources impact the Dane County community. I am happy to provide additional information to you or your staff.

Sincerely,

[NAME, affiliation, address, etc.]