

PROJECT 2020

Building on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Services

September 4, 2009

Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director
White House Office of Health Reform
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20500

Tina Tchen, Director
White House Office of Public Engagement
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. DeParle and Ms. Chen:

The National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA) and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) would like to thank you for your work to promote health care reform that benefits seniors. We appreciate your willingness to consider our ideas, as evidenced by the meeting you convened on August 14 with several organizations representing the interests of older Americans. During that discussion, we mentioned a piece of legislation that would take significant steps to expand long-term services and supports to help older adults live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. It's called *Project 2020: Building on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Services* (S. 1257/H.R. 2852). You expressed interest in meeting about this, so we wanted to follow up and share more information with you.

True health care reform must include substantial reforms on how long-term services and supports are delivered and financed. We simply cannot wait to address this area of health care, which is a major driver of costs. It is also clear that most Americans—and the 65+ population especially—see making improvements in long-term services and supports as a key part of health care reform. Recent polling indicates that nearly eight in ten Americans say they would be more likely to support a health care reform proposal that included coverage for home and community-based long-term care services. Seventy-eight percent of Americans say health care reform would benefit them personally if it included improved coverage of home and community-based long-term care services, and 92 percent say they want improved coverage for care that will keep them out of nursing homes (SCAN/LRP Survey, July 8, 2009).

We urge the Obama Administration to support the inclusion of *Project 2020* in health care reform legislation.



Project 2020: Building on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Services

Project 2020 is a three-pronged approach that will allow communities to provide services to the growing aging population at a lower cost to consumers and to Medicaid and Medicare. The key elements of this approach include: 1) person-centered access to information on aging and disability long-term services and supports; 2) evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention activities; and 3) enhanced nursing home diversion services. For additional information about *Project 2020*, please visit: www.n4a.org/advocacy/campaigns.

Project 2020, sponsored by Senators Maria Cantwell and Debbie Stabenow and Representatives Bruce Braley and John Sarbanes, offers the chance to strengthen our systems to meet the needs of an aging population with a bipartisan proposal. *Project 2020* will save funds in two federal entitlement programs and drive savings to states, localities and individuals. It will also advance the movement to rebalance long-term care by providing real, on-the-ground supports and services to older adults and persons with disabilities to help them delay or avert institutionalization. It is not a *comprehensive* long-term services and supports solution, but rather a conservative, targeted approach, with proven, effective outcomes that perfectly complements other current health care reform elements, such as the Healthy Living Initiative proposed by the Senate Finance Committee.

Project 2020 offers a fully developed plan to take three critical and tested aging services programs to scale nationally, providing the necessary infrastructure, dedicated funding, technical assistance and evaluation. **With federal outlays of \$2.5 billion over five years, the plan would reach more than 40 million Americans and is projected to reduce federal Medicaid and Medicare costs by approximately \$2.8 billion over five years; federal net savings would be approximately \$241 million over five years and \$1.1 billion over ten years.** *Project 2020* would also generate significant savings for state governments. For consumers, this program will empower individuals to make informed decisions and to better conserve and extend their own resources using lower-cost evidence-based programs, including consumer-directed options for care in the community.

Project 2020 evolved from long-term care initiatives of the Administration on Aging (AoA) and CMS and evaluated work in the field. It builds on the historic role of the Aging Services Network—AoA, State Units on Aging (SUAs), Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Title VI Native American aging programs—established by the Older Americans Act (OAA). It is a comprehensive and integrated approach to enable older Americans and individuals with disabilities to make their own decisions, to take steps to better manage their own health risks, and to receive the care they choose in order to remain in their own homes and communities for as long as possible, thus avoiding unnecessary, unwanted and more costly institutionalization.

AoA, in cooperation with SUAs and AAAs, has been testing best practices in community-based long-term care that have been demonstrated to reduce the need for more expensive institutional care and

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prevent “spend down” to Medicaid for people of all ages with disabilities. *Project 2020* embraces these proven strategies as requirements for infrastructure development and participation in this program.

Thank you for your ongoing work to improve the health of millions of Americans through improving access to insurance coverage, investment in health and wellness programs, and taking steps to drive down health care costs. We look forward to working with you to expand on available long-term services and supports as part of health care reform legislation this year. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you about this proposal, which you expressed interest in at the August 14 meeting. To schedule a meeting, please feel free to contact us at smarkwood@n4a.org or mroherty@nasua.org.

Sincerely,



Sandy Markwood
CEO, n4a

Martha Roherty
Executive Director, NASUA

Attachments: 1) July 14 National Organization Sign-On Letter; 2) June 30 AARP Support Letter

The National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA), founded in 1964, represents the nation’s 56 officially designated state and territorial agencies on aging. The Association’s principal mission is to support visionary state leadership, advance state systems innovation and articulate a national policy on home and community based services for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is the umbrella organization for the 629 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and a voice in the nation’s capital for the 244 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S. The fundamental mission of the AAAs and Title VI aging programs is to provide services that make it possible for older individuals to remain in their homes, thereby preserving their independence and dignity. These agencies coordinate and support a wide range of home and community-based services, including information and referral, home-delivered and congregate meals, transportation, employment services, senior centers, adult day care and a long-term care ombudsman program. For more information, go to www.n4a.org.