

### Older Americans Act Funding: Overview

**Background:** The Older Americans Act (OAA) was passed in 1965 to support older adults to live at home and in the community with dignity and independence for as long as possible. Today, the OAA funds social and nutrition services for older adults and caregivers through networks of state and area agencies on aging, community service providers and tribes. OAA programs and services need to be fully funded to help older Americans get the support they need to age successfully at home and in their community.

#### Why are increases needed?

- Provide direct support to clients
- Age well at home with dignity
- Avoid institutionalization
- Support caregivers and workforce
- Reduce hunger and provide food security
- Respond to abuse, exploitation and neglect
- Increasing aging population

Program Funding Increase Request	Amount
<b>Title III</b>	
III-B: Supportive Services & Centers	\$820 million
III-C2: Home-Delivered Meals	\$1.284 billion
III-E: Family Caregiver Support	\$410 million
<b>Title VI</b>	
VI-A: Grants to Indians	\$76,528,000
VI-C: Native American Caregivers	\$24 million
<b>Title VII</b>	
Ombudsman/Elder Abuse	\$135 million

Significant increases in appropriations are required to ensure we can provide the direct care support that our clients require to be able to age well at home and avoid institutionalization. Current challenges with the direct care workforce have made

it more difficult to meet the demand for these in-home services and supports. Our requests for these long-overdue sustainable investments are essential for us to continue carrying out our mission— supporting the ability of older adults to age well at home safely and with dignity, as we all hope to do.

WAAN supports increases to every part of the OAA but prioritizes significantly increasing the capacity of the following OAA programs: Title III B Home and Community-Based Supportive Services, Title III C2 Home-Delivered Meals, Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program, Title VI Grants to Indians and Native American Caregivers, and Title VII Ombudsman and Elder Abuse programs.

OAA Title III B is our most flexible source of OAA funding, and a backbone set of services that were especially invaluable throughout the pandemic. We are requesting an additional \$820 million in funding for supportive services and centers. The need for such a substantial increase is because Title III B covers a vast array of services that our older adults rely on including transportation services, legal services, home modifications and repairs, in-home services, counseling, and more. Supportive services meet the original spirit of the Older Americans Act: to ensure older adults are able to live in the home and community with dignity and independence.

Title III C2 provides home-delivered meals to seniors in need. These vital services reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition in older adults. Home-delivered meals promote the health and wellbeing of older adults by assisting them in gaining access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services because proper nutrition can delay the onset of adverse health conditions. 52 percent of home-delivered meal recipients live alone and the social interaction they receive during their meal delivery is vital to their mental health. **55 percent of program participants report that their home-delivered meal provides half or more of their total food for their entire day.**

To continue to support these programs, we are asking for \$1.284 billion in 2024. This amount signals an investment in senior nutrition, not just keeping up with the status quo. From the most recent Meals on Wheels America survey, **one in three nutrition programs have a waiting list**. Funding at this level can help reduce waiting lists and eliminate food insecurity for older adults.

To support caregivers, we are requesting an additional \$410 million in Title III E services. As the aging population continues to grow, so does the need for both professional and unpaid caregivers. Our AAAs support these caregivers through the National Family Caregiver Support Program, providing them with training, respite, support groups, and other in-demand services that help older adults age in place. There are nearly 600,000 family caregivers in Wisconsin providing an estimated 490 million hours of care valued at \$6.9 billion annually. According to a recent AARP report, over 60 percent of caregivers indicated they were also working full or part-time. Nearly half (47 percent) of caregivers reported they have reduced their work hours (24 percent) or are considering leaving the workforce (23 percent). Investing in caregivers ensures that they can remain in the workforce and avoid pay cuts, helps older adults remain in their homes and out of costly institutions that cost taxpayers money, and provides them with access to training and respite.

Title VI A and C provide nutrition, wraparound, and caregiver services to Native American older adults, as a supplement to the other provisions of the OAA. Over the next several years, the number of older Native elders is expected to grow by 116 percent. Currently, there are 258,616 Native elders in the United States, and that is anticipated to grow to 443,000 in 2030 and 641,800 in 2060. The needs for programs and services for Native elders continues to grow. We are requesting an increase in funding in these critical Title VI program areas to support the delivery of services, which can often cost more on tribal lands than non-tribal lands.

Title VII provides funding for the Ombudsman Program. We are requesting \$135 million. The Ombudsman Program in WI advocates for the health, safety and welfare of older adults who live in nursing homes or assisted living or who receive services through the Family Care, PACE, Partnership or IRIS programs. Top complaints to the program include abuse, discharge/eviction, staffing and facility closures.

#### Sources:

- <https://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act>
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- AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving. Caregiving in the United States 2020. Washington, DC: AARP. May 2020. <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00103.001>.
- The Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance. Wisconsin Employer and Working Caregiver Survey. May 2022. Retrieved on July 26, 2022 from <https://wisconsin-caregiver.org/employer-engagement-workgroup>.
- <https://www.nicoa.org/policy/nicoas-recommendations-for-older-americans-act-reauthorization/>
- <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/take-action/advocate/advocacynews/2023/10/03/meals-on-wheels-america-and-nanasp-respond-to-stopgap-spending-bill-urging-congress-to-increase-federal-funding-for-senior-nutrition-services>.

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#### Core member organizations

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW) • Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) • Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA) • Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) • Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS) • Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND) • Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC) • Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) • Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) • Wisconsin Senior Advocates • Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA) • Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

#### Mission

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) works with and for all older adults by educating community members and policy makers on priority issues while advocating for meaningful change. Learn more at <https://gwaar.org/waan>.