

June 30, 2017

The Honorable Alexander Acosta
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington DC 20210

Dear Secretary Acosta:

The undersigned organizations that serve and advocate for older Americans urge you to reexamine the Department of Labor's (DOL) analysis of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) by applying the employment services evaluation criteria you articulated during the recent U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on DOL's budget.

Our organizations strongly support SCSEP, the only federal job training program focused exclusively on helping older Americans return to the workforce. SCSEP plays a vital role in positioning low-income, most-in-need older workers for employment success and economic security through its paid, on-the-job community training experiences.

We were heartened to hear during the June 7 hearing that you consider populations served when evaluating employment programs. In response to a question on another DOL program, you described your own evaluation methodology that focuses on job placement while considering population served. You noted that "in some hard to serve communities, if 50 or 75 percent of individuals find a job that's a big win" and that "what may on its face look like a less effective program may actually be quite effective given the community that it serves."¹

The Administration's skinny budget, which was released prior to your confirmation, specifically called out SCSEP's record of transitioning half of its unemployed participants into unsubsidized jobs as reason to eliminate the program.² SCSEP is required by the Older Americans Act (OAA) to serve older workers who are most-in-need and with significant barriers to employment. For example, 91% of SCSEP participants have low employment prospects, 53% were homeless or at-risk of homelessness, 20% were individuals with disabilities, 28% resided in rural areas, and 19% lived in areas of persistent unemployment.³ The average SCSEP participant has two or three of these unique employment barriers. SCSEP's success in transitioning one in every two most-in-need older workers exceeded DOL's own job placement goal for the program.⁴ SCSEP also exceeded your Department's employment retention and average earnings goals. Taken together, SCSEP is a big win for DOL and the older workers the program serves.

¹ U.S. House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee [June 7, 2017 Hearing](#) on DOL Budget

² Office of Management and Budget America First [Budget Blueprint](#)

³ Department of Labor [SCSEP Progress Report](#)

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor [FY 2018 SCSEP Budget Justification](#)

SCSEP also met its other congressionally-mandated goal of fostering individual economic self-sufficiency. All SCSEP participants earned minimum wage for every hour they trained in their communities. Of the more than 64,000 older workers who earned paychecks for their SCSEP training, 88% had a family income at or below the poverty level. In order to qualify for SCSEP employment services, program participants must have an income that did not exceed 125% of the poverty line. The independent review of the program prepared for DOL found that SCSEP was “increasing the overall quality of life of low-income elders who are having difficulty meeting their financial needs.”⁵ Congress reaffirmed the dual goals of promoting individual economic self-sufficiency and increasing job placement of older workers in its multi-year extension of SCSEP (P.L. 114-144).

Our organizations look forward to working with you and the Administration to help address the long-term joblessness and economic insecurity of older Americans. We encourage you to review SCSEP’s strong results and performance in relation to the population the program is required to serve under OAA and DOL regulations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Easterseals
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Institute for Indian Development (IID)
LeadingAge
Mature Services
National Able Network
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association for Hispanic Elderly
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Development Organizations
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Association of RSVP Directors
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD)
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging
National Council for Adult Learning
National Council on Aging
National Farmers Union
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National Urban League
Operation A.B.L.E. of Greater Boston
SER Jobs for Progress National Inc.
The WorkPlace

⁵ Evaluation of the Senior Community Service Employment Program [Final Report](#)