

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Frelinghuysen and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey:

The undersigned organizations that serve and advocate for older Americans are greatly concerned by fiscal years (FY) 2017 and 2018 proposals from the Administration to eliminate the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). As you finalize the FY 2017 appropriations process, **we urge you to fund SCSEP at no less than the enacted level of \$434,371,000** to preserve transitional jobs and training for unemployed older workers and to help them avoid the negative consequences of long-term unemployment on their health.

SCSEP is the only federal job training program focused exclusively on helping older Americans return to the workforce. A 2011 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found SCSEP “targets their services to a population...that is not targeted” by any other employment program.¹ As required by the Older Americans Act, at least 75% of total SCSEP expenditures last year were spent to pay wages for 65,170 older Americans to work and receive on-the-job training at 20,000 local nonprofit and government programs, including libraries, senior centers, and schools. Last year, SCSEP participants provided nearly 35 million staffing hours to these local programs, including more than 7 million hours serving the elderly through programs such as Meals on Wheels. The value of the work performed by SCSEP participants exceeded \$820 million, using Independent Sector estimates.

Eliminating SCSEP would result in a significant job loss in every state and tens of thousands of older workers with significant employment barriers would be harmed – including almost 18,000 older Americans residing in rural areas; more than 8,400 veterans; nearly 35,000 homeless or at risk of homelessness; more than 13,000 individuals with disabilities; and nearly 4,800 individuals aged 75 or older.

Based on DOL data from the last full program year, the following are examples of the number of transitional training jobs SCSEP provided in each state that would be eliminated on June 30, 2017, under the Administration’s proposals:

¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, [Report to Congress](#) (2011)

Connecticut:	541	Mississippi:	777	Missouri:	1,642
New Jersey:	1,789	New York:	3,918	Oklahoma:	1,161
Vermont:	259	Washington:	869		

The Administration's FY 2018 budget specifically calls out SCSEP's record of transitioning half of its unemployed participants into unsubsidized jobs. SCSEP is required by the Older Americans Act to serve older workers with barriers to employment and who are most in need, which should be taken into account when considering its placement rate into employment—only one of the performance metrics utilized to assess the effectiveness of this program.

Also, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that it takes an older worker almost a year (40 weeks on average) to return to the workforce after going unemployed – which is twice as long as it takes younger workers.² And for those SCSEP participants who secure an unsubsidized job in their community as a result of the SCSEP training, more than 70% remain on the job one year after exiting the program.³

The Older Americans Act also mandates healthy aging as well as labor market outcomes for SCSEP, as reflected in the conclusion of DOL's most recent evaluation of SCSEP by Social Policy Research Associates and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.⁴:

“Local SCSEP projects are providing much-needed services that increase the emotional well-being of older workers, offer much-needed staffing for host agencies, and place nearly half of its exiters who are available for work into unsubsidized employment....The evaluation has also suggested that employment outcomes reflect only one aspect of the program's objectives, which also include increasing the overall quality of life of low-income elders who are having difficulty meeting their financial needs.”

We are grateful for Congress' commitment to SCSEP and, in particular, the past investments made by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Last April, Congress extended and recommended 2-percent annual funding increases for SCSEP in its passage of the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-144). The law authorized \$445,189,405 for SCSEP in FY 2017. Your Committees also supported SCSEP in the FY 2017 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bills. **As you finalize the FY 2017 process, we respectfully ask that you once again invest in America's older workers by funding SCSEP at no less than the FY 2016 enacted level of \$434,371,000.**

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our organizations if you seek additional information about SCSEP. If you have further questions, please contact Maynard Friesz at 202-403-8345 or mfriesz@easterseals.com.

Sincerely,

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Unemployment Duration by Age](#) (2016)

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Service, [Final PY 2015 Statistics](#) (2016)

⁴ Social Policy Research Associates & Mathematica Policy Research, Inc [Evaluation of SCSEP Study](#) (2012)

Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE)
American GI Forum of the United States
ASPIRA Association
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
Easterseals
Experience Works
Farmworker Justice
Goodwill Industries International
Institute for Indian Development, Inc
LeadingAge
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mature Services, Inc.
National Able Network, Inc.
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 Hispanic Federal Executives
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 Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National Urban League
Operation A.B.L.E.
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
Senior Service America, Inc.
SER-Jobs for Progress National, Inc.
The Jewish Federations of North America
The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
The WorkPlace

Cc: The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman, Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee
The Honorable Tom Cole, Chairman, House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member, Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee