



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Barbara B. Kennelly, Chair

April 18, 2006

Via Fax

Dear Mr. Chairman/Congressman Obey:

We are contacting you about funding for an important program under the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, the geriatric health professions program.

The House version of the fiscal year (FY) 2006 bill removed virtually all spending for Title VII programs funded under the Health Resources and Services Administration, including the geriatrics health professions program. The Senate version of the bill restored \$31.5 million in funding for the program. The Conference agreement included the House version, eliminating the important program. Subsequently, the President's FY 2007 budget did not acknowledge this important program.

In prior years, Congress had demonstrated its strong support for the program through continued and increased appropriations from 2001 through 2005. For FY 2005, Congress appropriated \$31.5 million for geriatric health professions.

The geriatric health professions program is financed under the interdisciplinary, community-based linkages section of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and currently supports three initiatives. The Geriatric Academic Career Award (GACA) supports the development of newly trained geriatric physicians into academic medicine; the geriatric faculty fellowships are designed to train physicians, dentists, and behavioral and mental health professionals who decide to teach geriatric medicine, dentistry, and psychiatry; and the Geriatric Education Center (GEC) program provides grants to support collaborative arrangements involving several health professions schools and health care facilities to provide multidisciplinary training in geriatrics.

Given the lack of adequately trained health care providers in geriatrics, it is critical that this funding level is restored in order to address one of the most urgent problems facing this country as it ages. Furthermore, the December 2005 White House Conference on Aging ranked increased training in geriatrics among its top ten resolutions. We strongly urge you to reinstate funding for the geriatrics health professions program.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

AARP

AFSCME Retiree Program

Alliance for Aging Research

Alliance for Retired Americans

Alzheimer's Association

American Association for International Aging

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

American Foundation for the Blind

American Geriatrics Society

American Postal Workers Union Retirees

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Families USA
The Gerontological Society of America
International Union, United Auto Workers
Military Officers Association of America
NARFE
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc.
National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council On Aging
National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
National Osteoporosis Foundation
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
United Jewish Communities