



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Richard J. Fiesta, Chair

December 10, 2018

Dear Representative:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) are writing to express our strong support for reestablishing the House Select Committee on Aging (HSCoA). LCAO is dedicated to improving the lives of older adults and their families and to identifying and addressing the significant challenges and opportunities we face as our nation's population ages.

Now is the opportune time to reestablish the HSCoA. Every day 10,000 baby boomers turn 65. By 2030, nearly 75 million people in the U.S.—or 20% of the country—will be age 65 or older. As America grows older, the need for services provided under programs like Social Security, SSI, Medicare, Medicaid and the Older Americans Act also increases. All Americans are aging, and we also face a variety of intergenerational concerns that merit attention, such as growing family caregiver burdens and a burgeoning retirement security crisis. Addressing these demands in a fiscally responsible, bipartisan manner is an increasing challenge that deserves greater attention, understanding, and public engagement.

While lacking legislative authority, a HSCoA would support and reinforce the work of committees with jurisdiction. The HSCoA could more fully explore a range of issues and innovations that cross jurisdictional lines, while holding field hearings, engaging communities, and promoting understanding and dialogue. For example, the committee might shed light on promising models and practices for improving health and wellness, identify creative ways to promote retirement savings, explore new approaches for seniors to give back to their communities and younger generations through volunteer efforts, or address concerns of an increasingly diverse population.

A HSCoA would provide new opportunities for members to highlight their efforts on senior issues to constituents, and strengthen their own expertise on aging issues for work on other committees. The HSCoA would also complement the strong bipartisan work of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, which has effectively promoted member understanding on a range of issues, including the concerns of grandparents raising grandchildren, fraud and abuse of seniors, the effects of opioids on older Americans and their families, and the costs associated with isolation and loneliness.

From 1974 to 1992, the HSCoA—with chairs including Reps. Claude Pepper (FL) and Edward Roybal (CA)—analyzed, highlighted, and informed the work of committees with jurisdiction in developing innovative ideas and helping to generate effective solutions. Historically, the HSCoA

served as a unique venue that allowed open, bipartisan debate from various ideological and philosophical perspectives to promote consensus that, in turn, permeated standing committees. Issues addressed included elder abuse, Alzheimer's disease, special problems facing older women and older workers, and the end of mandatory retirement.

The fact is, millions of American over age 65 are struggling. Older adults—especially women and people of color—are at a greater risk of poverty. Half of Medicare beneficiaries have annual incomes below \$26,200 and over 60% of seniors rely on Social Security for at least half of their income. Seniors are also at far greater risk of chronic diseases and have particular difficulty affording rising health care costs due to their largely fixed incomes.

We urge you to join us in supporting the reestablishment of the House Select Committee on Aging by including this authority in the upcoming adoption of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 116th Congress on January 3rd.

Sincerely,