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November 26, 2019

Chairman Neal
Ways & Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

Ranking Member Brady
Ways & Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady:

On behalf of ADvancing States, I am providing these comments on the recent House Ways and Means Committee hearing titled "Caring for Aging Americans," a critical topic that our members care passionately about. ADvancing States (formerly the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities, or NASUAD) is a nonpartisan association of state government agencies and represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities. We work to support visionary state leadership, the advancement of state systems innovation, and the development of national policies that support home and community-based services for older adults and persons with disabilities. Our members administer a wide range of services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities. Together with our members, we work to design, improve, and sustain state systems delivering long-term services and supports for people who are older or have a disability and for their caregivers.

We appreciate the committee's efforts to address the myriad of challenges facing older Americans, including holding the November 14, 2019 hearing. We are also pleased to offer some brief comments from our membership to be added to the record:

During the hearing there was frequent discussion over the unacceptability of the prevalence of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of our nation's older adults – and we agree. One challenge in fully addressing this issue is a lack of a dedicated Federal funding source for adult protective services (APS) or for Elder Justice activities. Though we acknowledge that Congress has appropriated some funding for Elder Rights Support Activities over the past several years, this funding has been insufficient to provide APS and related services. Additionally, while under the Older Americans Act (OAA) the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocates for and investigates complaints of residents in facilities such as nursing facilities it is often underfunded and relies heavily on volunteers. Our state members report struggles with securing sufficient volunteers as well as with recruiting and retaining sufficient staff for the Ombudsman programs which, in part, is due to the limited and stagnant funding for the Ombudsman program.

The rapid increase in older Americans will likely place additional pressure on already strained Federal and State systems of care for older adults, particularly Medicare and



Medicaid. Medicaid, as the largest payer of long-term services and supports (LTSS) in the nation, is the de facto LTSS system for the U.S.—but there are many specific nuances within the different parts of the program and across states. To assist older adults with finding affordable, community-based options, entities such as Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)/No Wrong Door (NWD) provide information and referral/assistance and more enhanced versions, known as options counseling. Investing in support for ADRCs/NWD has dwindled over time and currently sits at only around roughly \$10 million nationally. Providing additional support to help individuals access information and options that are right for them on the front end before reaching a crisis can help avoid individuals spending down to Medicaid and conserving societal resources.

During the hearing there was also robust discussion over the absence of affordable LTSS insurance products available to most Americans. We agree that exploring new and innovative financing mechanisms to expand LTSS coverage options is critically important. States such as Washington State are currently innovating, which is pursuing a new state LTSS benefit where workers pay in through taxes and receive a defined LTSS benefit after reaching the vesting period. States are eager to partner with the Federal government to address this challenging area in order to pursue new solutions and experiment with innovative solutions to financing and delivering LTSS.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on this important topic. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact Damon Terzaghi at dterzaghi@advancingstates.org or Adam Mosey at amosey@advancingstates.org or 202-898-2578

Sincerely,

Martha Roherty
Executive Director
ADvancing States

Cc: Members of the House Ways & Means Committee