

Federal Budget News from Southwestern CT Agency on Aging Executive Director Marie L. Allen

On March 23, 2018 Congress passed a budget for the budget year that began October 1, 2017. Many programs serving older adults were renewed and many had slight fund increases. SWCAA is very thankful for the support of SHIP (called CHOICES in Connecticut) and the increase in the Older Americans Act programs. Older Americans Act funds are used to support our partner agencies via grants to the community. The information below provides specifics.

MEDICARE

State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)

Medicare is a complex program, and unbiased, personalized counseling is necessary to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries understand their rights and coverage options. SHIPs provide critically important services that go beyond what is available through 1-800-MEDICARE, on-line or written materials or other outreach activities. Currently, a network of more than 3,300 local SHIPs and over 15,000 counselors, 57 percent of whom are highly-trained volunteers, are providing one-on-one, face-to-face counseling to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries make the best choices for their situation, avoid late enrollment penalties and receive assistance when appealing denials of coverage. Investing in SHIP will help ensure that America's seniors and people with disabilities make wise decisions about their Medicare coverage.

While the National Committee urged appropriators to restore funding for SHIP to the FY 2016 level of \$52.1 million, they did increase funding for the program by \$2 million over FY 2017 to \$49.1 million for FY 2018. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended zero funding for SHIP and the committee-approved, H.R. 3358, the FY 2018 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill would have also provided no funding for the program.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

Older Americans Act (OAA) programs provide local services and assistance to help seniors live with independence and dignity in their own homes within their own communities. These services save lives, preserve families and reduce demand for more costly hospital and institutional care paid for by Medicare and Medicaid. However, funding for the OAA has not kept pace with inflation or population growth and eligible seniors face waiting periods for some services in most states. Fortunately, the Omnibus Appropriations bill provides the following funding increase for key OAA programs:

- **Supportive Services and Senior Centers:** \$385.1 million, a \$34.9 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended cutting Supportive Services and Senior Centers by \$3.1 million over FY 2017.
- **Congregate Meals:** \$490.3 million, a \$40 million increase over FY 2017.
- **Home Delivered Meals:** \$246.3 million, a \$19 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended cutting Home Delivered Meals by \$1.4 million over FY 2017.
- **Preventive Health:** \$24.8 million, a \$5 million increase over FY 2017.
- **National Family Caregiver Support Program:** \$180.6 million, a \$30 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended cutting this program by \$300,000 over FY 2017.
- **Protection of Vulnerable Older Americans:** \$21.7 million, a \$1 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended cutting this program by \$100,000 over FY 2017.
- **Elder Rights Support Activities:** \$15.9 million, a \$2 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended cutting this program by \$2 million over FY 2017.
- **Adult Protective Services/Elder Justice Initiative:** \$12 million, a \$2 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended cutting this program by \$2 million over FY 2017.
- **Alzheimer's Disease Demonstrations:** \$23.5 million, a \$4 million increase over FY 2017.
- **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP):** \$400 million. While the SCSEP is flat funded at the FY 2017 level, President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended zero funding for the program and the committee-approved, H.R. 3358, the FY 2018 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill, would have cut SCSEP by \$100 million over FY 2017.

BLOCK GRANT PROGRAMS

The following block grant programs help to fund Older Americans Act home-delivered meals and other programs to help seniors:

- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** \$3.3 billion, a \$300 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended zero funding for this block grant and the committee-approved, H.R. 3358, the FY 2018 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill would have cut CSBG by \$40 million over FY 2017.
- **Social Services Block Grant (SSBG):** \$1.7 billion. While SSBG is flat funded at the FY 2017 level, President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended zero funding for this block grant.
- **Community Service Block Grant (CSBG):** \$715 million. Although CSBG is flat funded at the FY 2017 level, President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended zero funding for this block grant, the committee-approved, H.R. 3358, the FY 2018 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill would have cut CSBG by \$115 million over FY 2017 and S. 1771, the Senate's FY 2018 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill would have cut the block grant by \$15 million over FY 2017.

OTHER PROGRAMS IMPORTANT TO SENIORS

- **Alzheimer's/dementia research funding at the National Institutes of Health:** \$1.828 billion, a \$414 million increase over FY 2017.
- **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP):** \$3.640 billion, a \$250 million increase over FY 2017. President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended zero funding for LIHEAP.
- **Section 202 Housing for the Elderly:** \$678 million, a \$175.6 million increase over FY 2017.
- **The Senior Corps Programs (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Foster Grandparents Program and Senior Companions Program):** \$202.1 million. Although the Senior Corps Programs are flat funded at the FY 2017 level, President Trump's FY 2018 budget recommended nearly zero funding for the programs.

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