

URGENT

TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT SENIOR SERVICES

Tools to help you advocate for the programs that keep older adults safe, independent, and connected.



- Legislative Contact Sheet
- Call Script for Advocating for Federal Funding
- Social Media Graphics
- Sample Letters to Elected Officials for Protective Programs



ADVOCACY TOOLBOX

Information from the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. Our West Michigan region includes Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo, and Osceola counties.

Michigan Senators

Name	District	Contact: P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909	County
Thomas Albert	Senate District 18	Phone: 517-373-1734 Email: sentalbert@senate.michigan.gov	Allegan Ionia Kent
Winnie Brinks	Senate District 29	Phone: (517) 373-1801 Email: senwbrinks@senate.michigan.gov	Kent
Jon Bumstead	Senate District 32	Phone: (517) 373-1635 Email: senjbumstead@senate.michigan.gov	Mason
Roger Hauck	Senate District 34	Phone: (517) 373-1760 Email: senrhauck@senate.michigan.gov	Mecosta, Osceola
Mark Huizenga	Senate District 30	Phone: (517) 373-0797 Email: senmhuizenga@senate.michigan.gov	Kent
Aric Nesbitt	Senate District 20	Phone: (517) 373-0793 Email: senanesbitt@senate.michigan.gov	Allegan, Kent
Rick Outman	Senate District 33	Phone: (517) 373-3760 Email: senroutman@senate.michigan.gov	Ionia, Kent, Lake, Montcalm, Newaygo
Roger Victory	Senate District 31	Phone: (517) 373-6920 Email: senrvictory@senate.michigan.gov	Allegan

Michigan House of Representatives

Name	Contact: P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909	County
Joey Andrews	Phone: 517-373-0827 Email: joeyandrews@house.mi.gov	Allegan
Nancy DeBoer	Phone: (517) 373-0846 Email: nancydeboer@house.mi.gov	Allegan
John Fitzgerald	Phone: (517) 373-0835 Email: johnfitzgerald@house.mi.gov	Kent
Graham Filler	Phone: (517) 373-1778 Email: grahamfiller@house.mi.gov	Ionia, Montcalm
Joseph Fox	Phone: (517) 373-0825 Email: josephfox@house.mi.gov	Lake, Mason, Newaygo
Carol Glanville	Phone: (517) 373-0476 Email: caglanville@house.mi.gov	Kent
Kristian Grant	Phone: (517) 373-1800 Email: kristiangrant@house.mi.gov	Kent
Matt Hall	Phone: (517) 373-1787 Email: matthall@house.mi.gov	Allegan
Stephen Wooden	Phone: (517) 373-1790 Email: stephenwooden@house.mi.gov	Kent

Michigan House of Representatives Cont.

Name	Contact: P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909	County
Gina Johnsen	Phone: 517-373-1796 Email: ginajohnsen@house.mi.gov	Ionia, Kent
Tom Kunse	Phone: (517) 373-7317 Email: tomkunse@house.mi.gov	Lake, Mecosta, Osceola
Pat Outman	Phone: (517) 373-3436 Email: patoutman@house.mi.gov	Ionia, Kent, Montcalm
Bryan Posthumus	Phone: (517) 373-0830 Email: bryanposthumus@house.mi.gov	Kent
Angela Rigas	Phone: (517) 373-1403 Email: angelarigas@house.mi.gov	Allegan, Kent
Phil Skaggs	Phone: (517) 373-0836 Email: philskaggs@house.mi.gov	Kent
Rachelle Smit	Phone: (517) 373-0615 Email: rachellesmit@house.mi.gov	Allegan
Curtis VanderWall	Phone: (517) 373-1747 Email: curtisvanderwall@house.mi.gov	Mason
Pauline Wendzel	Phone: (517) 373-1799 Email: paulinewendzel@house.mi.gov	Allegan

United States Congress Members

Name	Contact:	County
Senator Elissa Slotkin	United States Senate 825B Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510-2204 Phone: (202) 224-4822	Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo Osceola
Senator Gary Peters	United States Senate 724 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510 Phone: (202) 224-6221	Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo Osceola
The Honorable John Moolenaar	United States House of Representatives 246 Cannon House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-3561	Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo Osceola
The Honorable Hillary Scholten	United States House of Representatives 1317 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-3831	Kent
The Honorable Bill Huizenga	United States House of Representatives 2232 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-4401	Allegan

Tips for Engaging with Your LEGISLATORS

Advocacy is the act of supporting, promoting, or speaking out for a cause, idea, policy, or group. It involves efforts to influence decision-makers, public opinion, and systems to bring about social, political, economic, or environmental change.

Introduce Yourself and Your Connection to the Area

Clearly state who you are, where you live, and why their decisions matter to you. Emphasize that you are a constituent, and they represent your concerns.

Make it Personal

A personal story—yours or a client's—can make a powerful impact. A brief, heartfelt statement helps put a human face on the issue and strengthens your message.

Be specific

Clearly outline the action you want them to take. Do you want them to support or oppose a specific bill? Speak out on an issue? Vote a certain way? Providing a clear action item increases the likelihood of a response.

Share the Impact

Numbers can strengthen your message. Share a compelling statistic—such as the number of people affected, services provided, or community impact—to reinforce the urgency and importance of your request.

Ways to Advocate

You can choose the platform that works best for you:

- Make a phone call
- Send an email
- Write a letter

All forms of communication matter and contribute to change

Does My Call Make a Difference?

Absolutely! Staffers track and tally calls on key issues, and a high volume of outreach can influence decision-making. Your voice counts!

Older Americans Act (OAA) Legislative Call Script: FY26 Federal Budget Advocacy

Audience: Congressional Offices — Especially House Appropriations Members

Purpose: Urge Congress to reject proposed cuts and protect funding for Older Americans Act programs

Opening Statement: Hi, my name is [Your Name], and I'm a constituent calling to urge [Representative/Senator Name] to reject the proposed cuts to the Older Americans Act in the FY26 Presidential Budget.

These programs are a lifeline for thousands of older adults, veterans, and caregivers in our community. Cutting them would put vulnerable people at risk, cost taxpayers more in the long run, and undo 50 years of proven success."

Why It Matters

- OAA-funded services are often the only thing keeping older adults safe, independent, and out of crisis.
- Programming reduces emergency room visits, delays or prevents institutional care, and supports family caregivers.
- Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM) serves over 16,000 people each year, many in your district—through OAA-funded services.

The Threat

- The **FY2026 Presidential Budget** proposes to eliminate key **OAA programs**, including:
 - Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
 - Elder Abuse Prevention
 - Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (DPHP) (locally called *Engaging Wellness*)
- These programs completely zeroed out in the proposed budget, meaning no federal funding at all.

The Impact

- In Michigan, over 73,000 older adults are victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation each year.
- Cuts would leave vulnerable people without protection or paths to safety.
- Loss of DPHP services means more falls, unmanaged chronic conditions, and isolation.
- Family caregivers (48 million in the U.S.) face greater burden—many already balance jobs and 20+ hours of unpaid care weekly.

The Bottom Line

- OAA programs are cost-effective, proven, and locally delivered\$1 invested = \$3 saved in Medicaid/institutional care.
Supporting aging in place saves taxpayer money and improves health outcomes.

The Ask

Vote NO on any FY26 budget proposal that includes cuts to Older Americans Act programs. Instead, support full funding and increased investment in these essential services that protect the health, dignity, and independence of older adults and caregivers.

Thank you for standing with older adults.

Questions or follow-up? Contact: AAAWM CEO Kendrick Heinlein 616-222-7018

Social Media Sample Posts

How to share:

1. **Copy text**, add your own service focus or client story if you'd like
2. **Save image**, Choose the "download image" link, this should open an image that you can save for sharing later
3. **Follow along** on our socials to share from there:
 - a. www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAging
 - b. www.linkedin.com/company/area-agency-on-aging-of-western-michigan-inc

What happens when you cut what keeps people safe?

Without Older Americans Act funding, thousands of older adults could lose access to meals, in-home care, elder abuse prevention, and more.

Aging with dignity should never be up for debate.



[Download Image](#)

Did you know?

Falls are the #1 cause of injury for older adults, and the average hospital stay costs over \$30,000.

OAA-funded prevention programs cost less than \$500 per person and reduce falls by up to 55%.

Smart policy = Prevention, not crisis care.



[Download Image](#)

Who's caring for the caregivers?

There are 48 million family caregivers in the U.S., most juggling jobs, parenting, and at least 20 hours a week of unpaid care for an aging loved one.

Without support, many are forced to leave the workforce, reduce hours, or burn out completely.

Older Americans Act programs provide:

- Respite care
- Support and training
- In-home services

These services *lighten the load* and help families stay strong and connected.

Tell Congress: Care for caregivers. Fund the Older Americans Act.

For over 50 years, the Older Americans Act has helped older adults age with dignity, health, and safety—and saved taxpayers money doing it. These aren't extras—they are smart, effective public policy.

Cutting OAA services means higher costs, more crisis, and greater strain on families.

Tell Congress: Fund the Older Americans Act. It works.



Caregiver's TO DO LIST

- ☐ Call Mom's doctor to reschedule appointment
- ☐ Sort Dad's medications for the week
- ☐ Check on insurance paperwork
- ☐ Drop off groceries & fix the handrail
- ☐ Coordinate transportation to PT
- ☐ Follow up with the home care aide
- ☐ File paperwork for Medicaid or VA benefits
- ☐ Advocate with nursing home/ombudsman

CAREGIVERS CAN'T DO IT ALL

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AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF WESTERN MICHIGAN



WHY THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT WORKS



Smart Investment

- ▶ **\$1 invested = \$3 saved**
- ▶ **Reduces** hospital, Medicaid, & long term care costs
- ▶ Helps people **stay at home**, not in institutions



Trusted Oversight

- ▶ Delivered **locally** by Area Agencies on Aging
- ▶ **50+ years** of experience & service delivery
- ▶ **Proven**, accountable, & community-based



Real Impact

- ▶ **16,000+** older adults served region-wide each year
- ▶ Keeps families strong & **communities connected**
- ▶ **Services** include meals, transportation, and caregiver relief

[Download Image](#)

Elder abuse is often hidden, but the impact is devastating.

Eliminating Elder Abuse Prevention and Ombudsman programs through the Older Americans Act takes away the only support many older adults have.

Stand up for safety. Say NO to the proposed budget that eliminates these and other programs.



PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

73,000

The number of older Michiganders that experience abuse each year. Most cases go unreported.

CUTTING ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION AND OMBUDSMAN SERVICES LEAVES VICTIMS WITHOUT A VOICE.

SPEAK UP: CONTACT CONGRESS

Source: Michigan.gov Attorney General

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

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Programs like falls prevention classes and chronic disease workshops help older adults stay healthy, out of the hospital, and in their homes.

Every dollar spent on prevention saves \$3 in Medicaid and long-term care costs.

Don't cut what works.



THE MOST EFFECTIVE PROTECTION is PREVENTION

Disease Prevention & Health Promotion Services:

- ✓ Reduce falls
- ✓ Support chronic disease management
- ✓ Lower hospital visits
- ✓ Support mental wellness
- ✓ Improve physical functioning

These programs save taxpayer dollars while helping older adults live longer, healthier lives at home.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF WESTERN MICHIGAN

[Download Image](#)



Dear Congressman John Moolenaar,

For thousands of older adults in our region, services funded through the Older Americans Act (OAA) are the only thing keeping them safe, independent, and out of crisis. As a member of the **House Committee on Appropriations**, your leadership is essential in determining whether these vital supports continue or disappear.

I am writing to you to express my deep concern regarding the proposed elimination of critical OAA programs outlined in the recently released FY2026 Presidential budget. These proposed cuts would have a devastating impact on the lives of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and veterans in our communities, particularly in protective areas such as **Elder Abuse Prevention**, the **Long-Term Care Ombudsman**, and **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (DPHP)**.

The **Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM)** serves over **16,000 individuals annually across our nine-county region**, many of whom live in your district, through OAA-funded initiatives that support health, safety, and independence. These OAA programs are not extras. They are the reason thousands of people avoid emergency room visits, stay out of institutions, and remain connected to their communities.

If the proposed cuts are enacted, **people in our region would lose access to Disease Prevention and Health Promotion services** that help manage chronic conditions, reduce falls, and promote healthy aging at home. In a state, where over 73,000 older adults experience abuse, neglect, or exploitation each year, cuts to Elder Abuse Prevention efforts and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman would leave many without protection or a path to safety. (Michigan Department of Attorney General, n.d.). Reducing or eliminating funding **would not only endanger lives, but it would also shift far greater costs onto our healthcare and long-term care systems.**

These services are also fiscally responsible. For \$1 every dollar invested in these programs saves \$3 dollars in Medicaid or institutional care. Supporting aging in place not only improves outcomes, it reduces reliance on emergency rooms and long-term care facilities which saves taxpayers money. **Keeping people healthy and independent at home is both the most compassionate and most cost-effective approach.**

Family caregivers are another critical part of this picture. There are approximately 48 million family caregivers in the U.S.; 61% also hold jobs and provide at least 20 hours of unpaid care each week—the equivalent of a part-time job. Without the support offered through OAA services, many are forced to reduce work hours or leave the workforce entirely, further straining our economy and families alike.

Cutting these programs is not a cost-saving measure, it is a threat to public health, dignity, and safety. They are foundational safeguards for a growing population that deserves respect and protection.



I urge you to **vote NO** on any FY26 budget proposal that includes cuts to OAA programs and instead advocate for increased investment in the aging network. The needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers must be a national priority, especially as our population continues to age rapidly.

Thank you for your service and attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to hearing how you plan to defend these essential supports and the thousands of people who depend on them.

Sincerely,

Sincerely, Senior Advocate

Name: _____

Address: _____



Dear _____,

The most effective protection is prevention. I am writing to express deep concern about the recently released FY2026 Presidential budget, which proposes eliminating essential programs under the Older Americans Act (OAA), including **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (DPHP)**, a critical lifeline that helps older adults stay safe, healthy, and independent.

The Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan delivers these **vital services** to more than 16,000 older adults across a nine-county region. Through evidence-based workshops and community-based health programs, DPHP services reduce falls, helps manage chronic diseases like diabetes and arthritis, supports mental wellness, and improves physical functioning. These are not extras; they are **essential foundational support** that help people remain in their homes.

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion programs are also highly cost-effective. By avoiding unnecessary hospitalizations and delaying or preventing entry into long-term care, these services reduce strain on Medicaid and other public systems, while improving quality of life for older adults and their families. The proposed elimination of other OAA programs, such as Elder Abuse Prevention and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, would also leave many older adults without advocates to protect their safety and rights. Prioritizing preventative health and wellness is the most sustainable and responsible way to support an aging population. I urge you to oppose any FY26 budget that includes cuts to DPHP and other OAA services and to instead advocate for expanded investment in preventative health for older adults. **Your leadership on the Appropriations Committee is vital to ensure that older adults, veterans, and individuals with disabilities receive the services they need, and deserve.**

Thank you for your commitment to our community. I look forward to your response and your continued support for the health and well-being of our most vulnerable neighbors.

Sincerely,

Senior Advocate

Name: _____

Address: _____

Kent County Elder Abuse Coalition



Dear _____,

I am writing to express deep concern over the proposed elimination of **Elder Abuse Prevention** funding in the recently released FY2026 Presidential budget. These cuts target one of the few lifelines available to protect vulnerable older adults from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. The proposed budget would completely eliminate dedicated federal funding for **Elder Abuse Prevention under the OAA**, a critical loss at a time when the need for these services is growing.

At the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM), and throughout aging networks across the country, OAA funding forms the foundation of essential services that protect and support older adults. Programs like Elder Abuse Prevention, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, and Health Promotion and Disease Prevention are critical—particularly for vulnerable seniors who may be suffering in silence from abuse, exploitation, or neglect. According to the Michigan Department of the Attorney General, over 73,000 older Michiganders experience abuse each year. Without proper funding, these individuals are left without advocates, protection, or a voice.

The need is only increasing. Elder Abuse Prevention doesn't exist in isolation. It's part of a broader system supported by the OAA that includes caregiver support, home-based services, and care coordination. Cutting these services not only leaves individuals unprotected, but it also drives up costs across Medicaid, emergency care, and long-term care facilities. By 2030, one in five Americans will be over the age of 65 (U.S. Census Bureau). Michigan is already seeing this demographic shift, bringing with it a growing demand for services that help people age safely in their homes and communities—rather than in institutions.

This isn't just a financial decision; it's a moral one. Taking away essential protections and services from older adults is simply unacceptable. **We strongly urge you to oppose any budget proposal that includes cuts to Elder Abuse Prevention or other OAA programs, and instead champion robust investment in the aging services network.**

Your leadership matters. Please stand with us, and with the millions of older adults who are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Senior Advocate

Name: _____

Address: _____

Dear _____,

The **Long-Term Care Ombudsman** is often the only voice standing up for residents in long-term care facilities, individuals who may be isolated, vulnerable, and unable to advocate for themselves. The LTCO ensures that residents' rights are protected, addresses complaints of abuse or neglect, and works to improve the quality of care. Without this program, far too many would suffer in silence.

For 16,000 of older adults in our region alone, Older Americans Act (OAA) services are the only thing keeping them safe, independent, and out of crisis.

I am writing to express my deep concern over the proposed elimination of essential services funded through the OAA, as outlined in the recently released FY 2026 Presidential Budget Request. These proposed cuts would have a devastating impact on the lives of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and veterans in our communities, most critically, the proposed reduction to the **Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) program**, which provides vital advocacy for residents in nursing homes and other long-term care settings.

In Michigan, over 73,000 older adults experience abuse, neglect, or exploitation every year—and most cases go unreported (Michigan Department of Attorney General, n.d.). The LTCO program plays a frontline role in identifying, preventing, and resolving these issues. Reducing or eliminating funding would not only endanger lives but also shift far greater costs onto our healthcare and long-term care systems.

Supporting aging in place not only improves outcomes—it also reduces reliance on emergency rooms and long-term care facilities, saving taxpayer dollars. These programs also provide vital assistance to family caregivers, many of whom would otherwise be forced to leave the workforce to care for loved ones.

Eliminating funding for **Long Term Care Ombudsman advocacy** is not a cost-saving measure, it is a threat to public health, dignity, and safety. These are not optional services. They are foundational safeguards for a growing population that deserves respect and protection.

I urge you to reject these harmful cuts, vote **NO** on any budget proposal that includes reductions to OAA programs, and instead advocate for increased investment in the aging network. The needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers must be a national priority, especially as our population continues to age rapidly.

Thank you for your service and attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to hearing how you plan to defend these essential supports—and the thousands of people who depend on them.

Sincerely, Senior Advocate

Name: _____

Address: _____

ADVOCATES
for Senior Issues



The Source for Seniors

Dear _____,

I am writing to you to share grave concerns regarding President Trump's draft FY 2026 HHS budget because it includes a **major threat** to the ability of older adults to age well at home and in the community.

The President's draft budget proposes to split OAA programs into two different HHS agencies, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The budget draft also outlined plans to **zero out** many critical aging programs that support the older adults in your district such as OAA's evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention program (Title III D) and elder rights (Title VII) efforts to prevent elder abuse and neglect, among others.

Splitting up OAA programs into two different federal agencies undermines the facts that the different titles and subtitles programs are all part of ONE delivery system established by Congress in the Act: the Aging Network, with leadership at federal, state and local levels; and that the Act works so well because of that cohesive approach, allowing AAAs to provide a wide range of person-centered services to meet the needs of older adults and caregivers as efficiently as possible. The OAA turns 60 this year and has been a **tremendous success** by offering healthy aging, in-home care, transportation, nutrition, case management, social engagement, caregiver support and many other services.

If the proposed breakup of the programs and the elimination of major initiatives in the OAA goes forward, **it will severely impact** the ability of older adults and caregivers in West Michigan and beyond to get the services and supports they need to remain living at home and in the community versus facing placement in institutional settings, as well as drive cost inefficiencies through unnecessary and wasteful administrative burden on federal, state and local aging agencies.

Please do all you possibly can to ensure that federal administration of OAA programs follows the law, and the OAA programs that were formerly at the Administration for Community Living are moved intact to ACF. I also ask for your support to prevent the elimination of critical services to older adults in your district in the FY 2026 appropriations bills.

I look forward to your reply and your assistance on this matter. I am happy to discuss these concerns with you or your staff at any time and will be following up.

Sincerely,

Senior Advocate

Name: _____

Address: _____