

## Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging 2026 Federal Policy Priorities

### Support Swift Passage of S. 2120: Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act

Empowered by the Older Americans Act (OAA), Ohio's 12 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) help older adults and people with disabilities maintain optimal health, independence, and dignity in their homes and communities.

The OAA remains a vital lifeline for older Ohioans. In 2024, **Ohio's aging network served more than 549,000 individuals through OAA-funded services**. These services include home-delivered meals, personal care assistance, caregiver support, transportation and health promotion and disease prevention programs.

These supports address the real-life challenges that often lead to costly medical crises — food insecurity, isolation, unsafe housing, and lack of transportation. The results are measurable: OAA services help prevent avoidable hospitalizations, delay nursing home placement, reduce strain on Medicare and Medicaid, and support family caregivers.

The Act expired in September 2024. While services continue under temporary extensions, long-term certainty is essential for planning, contracting, and workforce stability.

**S. 2120 includes thoughtful, bipartisan updates that modernize the law while preserving its core mission.** Of particular importance to our agencies is the language clarifying AAA's contracting practices and commercial relationships. This provision supports innovative partnerships with private entities, enabling us to expand services, improve coordination, and better meet the evolving needs of Ohio's growing older population.

Ohio is home to approximately 2.8 million residents age 60 and older, and that number continues to grow. Reauthorizing the OAA is not only about sustaining current services; it is about **ensuring our aging network is equipped to meet future demand responsibly and efficiently**.

### Meet Future Demand: Sustain and Strengthen OAA Funding in FY 2027

Ohio's AAAs are grateful for increased OAA funding in FY2026. However, demographic growth continues to outpace available resources. OAA programs are cost-effective by design. They address the social drivers of poor health before they escalate into emergency room visits, hospital stays, or long-term institutional care. **These preventative investments lower Medicare and Medicaid expenditures, reduce caregiver burnout, and help older adults remain independent longer.**

**Increased annual funding across all OAA titles is essential** to ensure more older Ohioans can age safely at home, where they overwhelmingly prefer to be, while protecting federal and state healthcare dollars.

### Protect Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and Waiver Programs

AAAs play a key role in Ohio's Medicaid waiver programs for HCBS. They assist in assessing individuals for eligibility and enrollment in Medicaid waiver programs and help find the right services for them. AAAs also educate consumers about Medicaid long-term services and supports, conduct functional assessments, develop person-centered service plans and coordinate care across providers.

Ohio AAAs contract directly with Medicaid managed care organizations to support individuals enrolled in the Next Generation MyCare Ohio waiver program, ensuring dually eligible members receive coordinated Medicare and Medicaid services.

Medicaid HCBS includes home health aide services, homemaker assistance (meals, laundry, housekeeping), adult day services, supportive housing and related services. Reducing HCBS funding would not reduce need — it would shift individuals into nursing homes, which are significantly more expensive for Medicaid and often not the preferred setting for care. Protecting HCBS is both fiscally responsible and aligned with the goal of preserving independence.

**Congressional leadership is essential to ensure that cost-effective, community-based services remain accessible to older adults who rely on them.**