

### Position

---

Generations United strongly supports the mission of the Older Americans Act: to help older adults maintain maximum independence in their homes and communities and to promote a continuum of care for vulnerable seniors. In past reauthorizations, Generations United has successfully advocated for intergenerational opportunities to improve programs and respond to specific needs. Intergenerational programs bring together diverse groups and networks and multiply human resources by engaging volunteers and maximizing financial resources by sharing sites and supplies.

Now is the time to create and implement policies that help generations help each other, thereby strengthening our economy. Studies show that sharing activities with younger people promotes positive health gains for older adults such as burning more calories, sustaining fewer falls, and reducing reliance on canes. Adults with dementia or other cognitive impairments experience more positive affects during interactions with children than they do during non-intergenerational activities and these changes last even after the activity ends.

### Recommendations

---

Generations United recommends Congress strengthen the intergenerational provisions in the Older Americans Act, promote increased support for grandfamilies, and encourage creating new pathways to engage the Baby Boomer generation with younger generations to share their talents and resources to benefit both the individuals involved and the whole community. Specific intergenerational recommendations are included for each provision detailed in this paper.

### Background

---

When Congress enacted the Older Americans Act in 1965, it recognized the importance of addressing the social service needs of older adults. Its mission is broad: to help older adults maintain maximum independence in their homes and communities and to promote a continuum of care for vulnerable seniors.

The 2012 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act offers a prime opportunity to reshape and modernize aging services in this country. The following recommendations foster community collaboration and offer creative thinking

to the challenges that lie ahead in the delivery of social services to the aging population.

### Multi-Generational Civic Engagement

---

Effective engagement of older volunteers, including the Baby Boomers, can dramatically increase the capacity of the Aging Network. Therefore, Generations United recommends Congress transition the Multi-Generational Civic Engagement pilot to a permanent program under Title II and invest in the nationwide adoption of the models and best practices evaluated in recent years;

- Develop new roles and opportunities for older volunteers to expand nonprofit services to vulnerable seniors, children, and their families;
- Authorize AoA to create a national strategy—in collaboration with the Corporation for National and Community Service—to tap older volunteers as a source of social capital to meet critical community needs; and
- Fund research on how older volunteers (a) increase capacity for the Aging Network and other nonprofits (b) enhance health and independence for the volunteers, and (c) foster improved outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

### National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)

---

In order to meet the increasing demands of this program, Generations United recommends strengthening the NFCSP by increasing its authorization to \$250 million per year.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program provides grants to state agencies on aging that award funds to area agencies on aging for caregiver support. The NFCSP was the first major intergenerational initiative in the Older Americans Act. Important changes made during the 2006 reauthorization have extended its support to many more families. The age limit was lowered from 60 to 55 for grandparents and other relatives raising children to qualify for supportive services through the NFCSP in addition to expanding service to caregivers of adult children with disabilities. Up to ten percent of funds can go toward supportive services for grandparents and other relatives raising children (Section 320).

Generations United recommends Congress offer incentives for AAAs to use the full 10% of NFCSP funds towards

services for grandparents and other relatives raising children by leveraging those dollars with supplemental funding, such as flexible child welfare dollars, to serve children in the care of grandparents or other relatives.

## **Projects of National Significance**

---

Generations United recommends reauthorizing the Projects of National Significance, including support to help with the expansion of grandparents and other relatives raising children in the NFCSP.

In 2000, the Projects of National Significance was specifically established to help with implementation of the NFCSP. In 2003, the funding for the Projects of National Significance ended. In 2006 the program eligibility expanded to individuals age 55 and over, but no additional support was provided to help with the transition.

Generations United recommends reinstating the Projects of National Significance to provide education, technical assistance, and share innovative and evidence based practices on services for grandfamilies.

## **Seniors Centers as Shared Sites**

---

Generations United recommends creating a senior center modernization fund to foster senior center innovation, leadership, and capacity-building and revitalize senior centers to incorporate the intergenerational shared site model. Senior centers have identified local needs and created a synergistic blend of activities and events appropriate to their communities. They collaborate with other community organizations and mobilize resources.

Each year, over 11,000 multipurpose senior centers provide a broad, coordinated array of services to 10 million older adults. Senior centers promote community engagement, help seniors stay healthy, prolong independence, and delay institutionalization.

Intergenerational shared sites are programs where older adults and young people receive services at the same site. Intergenerational shared sites vary in structure, but are generally composed of two components; one that serves the needs of older adults and a second that serves children/youth.

The use of space by multiple generations makes common sense, benefits young people and older adults, and can be an important solution in helping communities and organizations stretch their scarce resources.

## **Livable Communities**

---

The rise in the number of aging citizens will affect the social, physical, and economic fabric of our nation's cities and counties, dramatically affecting local policies, programs, and services in the areas of aging, health, and human services; housing and transportation; education/recreation; and volunteerism, lifelong learning and civic engagement.

Livable communities for all ages are defined as places where citizens can grow up and grow old with maximum independence, safety and well-being.

State and local governments already have a mandate to develop and implement broader long-term community infrastructure and service systems in a variety of arenas. Despite the impending demographic forecast, few communities have begun to prepare to address the aging of their population.

Generations United recommends establishing new provisions with dedicated funding authorizations to support AAAs and Title VI programs to assist county, city and tribal governments across the nation to proactively prepare for the aging of their communities. The provisions would authorize funding and outline the role and activities to be performed by a full-time planner/community organizer position. This new planner/community organizer would take a leading role in working with other agencies and stakeholder organizations (including children and youth organizations) in developing a comprehensive livability plan, including approaches that design communities for all ages, and implementation strategy factoring the range of community policies, programs and services.

## **Nutrition**

---

The elderly nutrition program, the oldest and perhaps most well-known Older Americans Act service, provides meals and socialization to older people in congregate settings and meals to frail seniors in their own homes. The purposes of the program are to reduce hunger and food insecurity, promote socialization, and provide meals to the homebound.

Generations United recommends Congress provide incentives for state nutrition programs for older adults to promote joint meal programs with schools and other facilities serving meals to children (Section 316).