



Action Alert!

Contact Your Senators to Support H.R. 4334 -- Includes TBI Screening Due to Falls Among Older Adults

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
January 30, 2020

Dear NASHIA Member:

We are pleased to report that a final, bipartisan, bicameral compromise bill and section-by-section summary reauthorizing the Older Americans Act were released yesterday morning. The compromise bill, Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020, will maintain the bill number from the House bill, H.R. 4334, and is intended to be an amendment in the nature of a substitute to the House-passed bill so that it can move directly to Senate floor consideration and bypass Senate Committee activity.

The bill reflects months of negotiations among lawmakers, key staff and advocates and includes provisions advocated by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators with regard to screening for traumatic brain injury (TBI) following a fall and including TBI in health promotion activities.

We now urge you to contact your Senators to move this bill. As the bill came from the House of Representatives, it will need to go back to the House after the Senate passes it. Therefore, Senate (and House staff) are welcoming letters of endorsement and grassroots support for this measure! Read further to see what you can do. If you have any questions, email publicpolicy@nashia.org.

Background

First enacted in 1965, the Older Americans Act (OAA) funds critical services that keep older adults healthy and independent -- services such as meals, job training, senior center, health promotion, benefits enrollment, caregiver support/respice, transportation, and more.

The original legislation established authority for grants to States for community planning and social services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging. The law also established the Administration on Aging (AoA) to administer the newly created grant programs and to serve as the federal focal point on matters concerning older persons.

The 2016 OAA Act reauthorized programs for FY 2017 through FY 2019. It included provisions to protect vulnerable elders by strengthening the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program and elder abuse screening and prevention efforts. It also promoted the delivery of evidence-based programs, such as falls prevention and chronic disease self-management programs.

Proposed TBI Provisions

The Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020, previously known as the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019, includes for the first time sections pertaining to TBI. Specifically:

Sec.110. Screening for fall-related traumatic brain injury; addressing public health emergencies and emerging health threats negative health effects associated with social isolation.

Inserts into the definition of disease prevention and health promotion services (1) screenings, coordination of treatment, and other services for fall-related injuries, including traumatic brain injury; (2) services that are responses to public health emergencies and emerging health threats; and (3) screening and coordination of services and health care to prevent and address negative health effects associated with social isolation.

Sec.213. Screening for negative health effects associated with social isolation and traumatic brain injury.

Adds screening for negative health effects associated with social isolation and traumatic brain injury to the supportive services designed to provide health screening.

Sec.302. Public awareness of traumatic brain injury.

What Can You Do?

Call or email your Senators to tell him/her to support H.R. 4334, reauthorizing funding for the Older Americans Act programs, including provisions relating to traumatic brain injury resulting from falls. (Click [here](#) to view NASHIA's letter sent to the Senate leadership Nov. 7, 2019.) You may access your Senators contact information [here](#).

Pointers:

- In 2014, falls were the leading cause of traumatic brain injuries and accounted for almost half of all traumatic brain injury-related emergency department visits.
- Four in five traumatic brain injury-related emergency department visits in older adults aged 65 years and older were caused by falls, and rates were even higher for individuals 75 and older.
- TBI is also a major concern for older adults aged 75 and older, with a high rate of death and hospitalization due to falls.



*The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators assists State government
in promoting partnerships and building systems
to meet the needs of individuals with brain injuries and their families.*
www.nashia.org

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
PO Box 1878, Alabaster, AL 35007