

The Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness Provides Recommendations for Congress to Strengthen the Older Americans Act

Washington, DC – On March 21st, 2024, the [Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness](#), comprised of a diverse set of national organizations including consumer groups, health plans, health care providers, and technology innovators, provided comment on the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions’ Request for Information on policies to consider during the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA). The Coalition’s recommendations aim to enhance the OAA's ability to address social isolation and loneliness and foster social connection.

“Every day in the US, [10,000](#) individuals turn 65, and older adults will represent [over 20%](#) of the population by 2050. It is essential to strengthen the Older Americans Act by securing funding and maintaining the accessibility of vital services for seniors and their caregivers, a population that is particularly at risk for experiencing social isolation and loneliness,” said Jillian Racoosin Kornmeier, Executive Director of the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness.

Over 8 million Americans experience social isolation, and nearly half of older adults feel isolated, alone, or left out.¹ Social isolation and loneliness contribute to poor health outcomes for older adults by increasing their risk of developing serious health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, dementia, mental health disorders, and a 26% increased risk of death. In addition to adverse health effects, it is estimated that Medicare spends \$6.7 billion annually as a result of individuals being socially isolated.²

The OAA was established in 1965 to create a network of community-based services to address older adults’ health and social needs. In 2020, when the OAA was last reauthorized, Congress expanded the role of the Aging Network in addressing social isolation and loneliness through screening, prevention, research, and long-term planning.

“The Coalition is proud to present our OAA Reauthorization Priorities, aimed at guiding federal policymakers toward solutions that will aid isolation prevention efforts and advance social connection for older adults. We will work steadfast to secure bipartisan and bicameral support for these priorities,” stated Racoosin Kornmeier.

¹ G. Anderson and C. Thayer, AARP Research. Social Isolation: Myths vs. Realities Among Older Adults Age 40 and Over. 2018.

² AARP Public Policy Institute. Medicare Spends More on Socially Isolated Older Adults. 2017.

To continue building on the strengths of the OAA's role in addressing social isolation and fostering social connection, the Coalition urges Congress to consider the following:

- Safeguard the core mission of the OAA to maximize the independence, wellbeing, and health of older adults and their caregivers while modernizing the Aging Network's systems and programs to meet current and future needs.
- Significantly increase the authorized funding levels for all OAA programs and invest in the Aging Network's capacity to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older adults and caregivers by:
 - Increasing funding for OAA nutrition programs and supportive services to enhance community-based assistance and community service programs;
 - Dedicating funding to expand multigenerational support services as a part of community programs;
 - Expanding access to evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion services and advance care planning; and
 - Extending the RAISE Family Caregivers Act and allocating additional funding to the National Family Caregiver Support Program to bolster its capacity to provide resources, access to services, respite, education, and training.
- Codify directed funding to Aging Network organizations to provide resources to support training, technical assistance, and evaluations. These resources would proliferate innovative interventions, evaluated by scientific experts to address social isolation and loneliness and promote social connection, including the use of emerging technologies. Direct the Administration for Community Living to provide guidance and technical assistance, informed by research and practice experts, to help states incorporate screening tools and measures on social isolation, loneliness, and social connection in their aging plans.

Learn more about the Coalition's recommendations [here](#).

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The Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness (CESIL) brings together a diverse set of national organizations including consumer groups, health plans, health care providers, technology innovators, patient advocates and more to develop and advocate for federal policy solutions to address the crisis of social isolation and loneliness. For more information, please visit: endsocialisolation.org