



A Statement by ASA

The Trump Administration announced yesterday a major restructuring of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that includes massive staff cuts and the elimination of the Administration for Community Living (ACL). ACL is the only federal agency exclusively focused on supporting older people and people with disabilities.

The American Society on Aging (ASA) is deeply troubled by losing the agency that oversees lifeline programs used by 11 million older Americans and their families every year. We are also very concerned by what this could mean for millions of adults with disabilities also supported by ACL, and for their ability to continue living and aging in communities with dignity and economic opportunity. The critical programs people receive through ACL's coordination include transportation, meals delivered to homes and served in community centers, health and wellness programs, support for families managing work and caregiving responsibilities, legal and elder rights services, and so much more. Every day, ACL's widespread reach touches so many lives, and if not ours today, likely tomorrow as we grow older.

Over 11,000 people turn 65 every day, and in four years we will have more older Americans than children for the first time. ASA believes that every federal agency should be factoring aging into its work. Yet ACL orchestrates the highly effective network through which services are delivered. We have serious questions about what its dissolution will mean for the continuity of critical services, and how HHS will effectively integrate ACL's operations into other agencies, especially with reduced staff.

In addition, for the past two years, ACL has made remarkable progress leading the first National Plan on Aging, effectively coordinating and advancing strategy across 16 federal agencies and departments. ACL has also established important initiatives like the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center, which is working to ensure a well-prepared sector of professionals is available to help people and families who need care. Questions about how this momentum and coordination will continue at a time of such significant population change also remain.

Taken together with recent attacks on Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, the prevention of elder fraud and abuse, and cuts to Alzheimer's disease funding, ASA is deeply concerned that this action and the gutting of HHS will further threaten our ability to live full, meaningful lives as we age. Eliminating ACL effectively renders older people, people with disabilities, and those who serve them invisible in the structure of HHS.