



# Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness

**Monthly Policy Committee Meeting**

March 2024

# Agenda

- Welcome & New Member Introductions!
- Older Americans Act Updates
- Hill Engagement
- CESIL Legislation Concepts for Review
- Policy and Legislative Updates
- Closing & Next Steps

**Welcome New  
Members!**

# **Older Americans Act Updates**

# Older American Act (OAA) Reauthorization Activities

- The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) committee held a hearing on the Older Americans Act and heard from expert witness from organizations like the National Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels and the FL Department of Elder Affairs.
- Following the hearing, the HELP committee announced a request for information (RFI) the HELP Committee should consider during the reauthorization. Based off of member feedback, CESIL submitted a comment letter in response to the RFI.
- The comment letter focused on maintaining the core mission of the OAA, increase authorized funding levels to existing support programs and services, and incorporate screening measures for social isolation and loneliness.

# CESIL OAA Policy Priorities

CESIL has developed its policy priorities and recommendations regarding the OAA reauthorization, which include:

- 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
- Codify directed funding to Aging Network organizations to provide resources to support training, technical assistance, and evaluations.
- Direct ACL 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 area aging plans.

# CESIL Participates in HELP Committee Listening Session on Older Americans Act

- CESIL was invited to participate in a listening before the Senate HELP committee for our input on the Older Americans Act. Participating offices include:
  - Senators Cassidy, Casey, Collins, Kaine, Braun, Markey, Mullin, Sanders
- The staff were interested in learning more about how OAA funded nutrition and social connection services could better address unmet needs and how COVID-19 flexibilities impacted services
  - CESIL emphasized that all nutrition services are more than a meal – regardless of whether they are provided at congregate meal sites, via home delivery, or pick-up
  - We also noted that having flexibility in the OAA program allows tailoring of services to meet community's specific needs
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Program (NANASP), MAZON, and Meals on Wheels also presented during this session.

# Long-Term Care Workforce Discussion Draft Bill

- On Monday, Senator Casey shared a discussion draft of the Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act. Comments on the draft are due [this Friday](#).
- Based on our discussion today, CESIL staff can draft a comment letter and circulate to members for review tomorrow. [We will need any feedback by noon on Friday](#) so we can incorporate edits by the submission deadline.

## Major Provisions:

- 10% enhanced FMAP for HCBS provided by DCW through FY 2034
- Provides grant to support DCW recruitment, compensation, retention, and career pathways
- Updates labor laws with DCW and domestic worker protections & rights
- Requires HHS to develop a tool to assess DCWs well being and publish data collected
- Requires HHS to establish a National Strategy on DCW Compensation

## Our Comment Ideas:

- We broadly support the need for continued investment in DCW and LTC services
- DCWs are at increased risk of social isolation and loneliness
- Social isolation and loneliness contribute to stress, burnout, and mental illness risk
- The DCW well-being assessment tool should include social isolation and loneliness measures
- The National Strategy should incorporate recommendations for fostering DCW social connections and reducing social isolation



# Hill Engagement

# Upcoming and Recent Hill Engagement

## Recent Hill Engagement:

- Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)
- Sen. Pete Ricketts (R-NE)
- Rep. Mike Flood (R-NE)
- Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA)

## Upcoming Hill Engagement:

- Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT)  
June 12<sup>th</sup>

# **CESIL Legislation Concepts for Review**

# Themes from Our Conversations on the Hill

- Several legislators are interested in continuing to champion policy solutions that promote social connection and resiliency and reduce the risks of social isolation and loneliness. This includes:
- Desire to support local efforts and communities in developing plans, strategies, and systems to facilitate social connection across sectors and measure impact
- Continue to push forward planning, data collection, and evaluation of efforts across federal, state, and local governments

## **Key Bipartisan Themes:**

- Empowering communities
- Supporting older adults and veterans
- Bolstering the economy to support how connected we are
- Civic engagement
- Addressing behavioral health at all ages
- Data collection & measurement

# Legislation Concept #1:

## Grants to Support Local Planning & Action

- The Foundation for Social Connection has asked, what can cities, counties, and communities do to promote social connection for their residents?
  - The Action Guide outlines a 6-step approach for how any local community can assess their unique strengths/needs, develop a comprehensive social connection plan, and manage implementation, and evaluate the efficacy of their interventions.
  - For local leaders to successfully implement this strategic approach, they need additional guidance and support.
- We would like to establish a grant to provide Socially Connected Communities start-up funding and TA to test approaches to fostering social connection within their communities.
  - Communities would be required to use a tool that facilitates planning across sectors, and engage diverse community partners and populations

**Reactions to this approach?**

# Additional Legislation Concepts for Consideration

## **Increase access to public spaces**

- Enhance funding for public spaces like libraries, community art spaces, and green spaces
- Facilitate partnerships between federal agencies and art, culture, and civic engagement programs
- Create a place-based tax incentive for community development
- Provide a federal match for projects that incorporate elements of accessible community placemaking

## **Invest in the community to contribute to the economy**

- Increase funding for the intergenerational career development
- Create micro-financing models in communities through cooperative banks
- Enable the creation of place-based enterprises (social co-ops)

## **Support intergenerational programming**

- Increase funding for AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparents program
- Combine funding for intergenerational sites
- Advance family-centered and multigenerational policy, funding, TA, and research efforts

## **Increase local civic engagement and volunteer opportunities**

- Engage with stakeholders on existing programs within Corporation for National and Community Service to provide volunteer services to lonely and isolated individuals
- Increase funding for USDA to lead efforts on civic engagement in rural communities

Which concepts would you be most excited to advocate for?

Which align with your organizational priorities?

How could we improve these concepts to:

- Increase impact
- Improve feasibility
- Decrease fiscal impact

Who else should we consult for feedback on these concepts?

# **Policy and Legislation Updates**

## **Sign-on Letter Supporting *Improving Measurements For Loneliness and Isolation Act* ([H.R. 6284](#)) ([S.3260](#))**

- H.R. 6284 would establish a national working group to formulate recommendations for standardizing the measurements of social isolation and loneliness, as well as defining relative terms like isolation and loneliness
- Representative Mike Flood (R-NE) and Senator Pete Ricketts (R-NE) each introduced a version of this bill in their respective chambers in November of last year, with Rep. Flood's version garnering some bipartisan support.
- The Coalition applauds the efforts by both members of Congress and will be circulating a letter of support in the coming days to encourage Congressional leadership to expedite this legislation.



# Recently Endorsed Legislation

- [S. 3766](#), [H.R. 7274](#): Connecting Caregivers to Medicare Act of 2024
  - This bill would provide outreach and education to Medicare beneficiaries to simplify access to information for family caregivers
  - Introduced by Senator Tillis (R-NC) and Rep. Carey (R-OH)
- [H.R. 5533](#): Healthy at Home Act of 2023
  - Implements the Healthy Homes Initiative, which has the goal of addressing health and safety issues in residential properties. The legislation additionally tasks the CDC and EPA with conducting a comprehensive study on the health effects of residential mold growth
  - Introduced Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT)
- CESIL endorses both of these bills and encourages its members to consider doing the same

# **President Biden Addresses Mental Health Crisis of Isolation and Loneliness in State of the Union Address**

- President Biden delivered his third State of the Union Address in early March, covering a myriad of topics related to healthcare.
- In his speech, he discussed his budget which allocated resources to Medicaid-like coverage extensions and continuous eligibility, restoring the Child Tax Credit, increasing access to behavioral health, and extending home and community-based services.
- In referring to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the President mentioned the “mental health crisis of isolation and loneliness” that was produced by the circumstances of the pandemic.

# CDC Releases Report on Adverse Effects of SDOH and HRSN

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recently released a study](#) using the 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data that assessed measures of adverse social determinants of health (SDOH) and health-related social needs (HRSN) among U.S. adult populations.
- The study used measures such as life satisfaction, social and emotional support, social isolation or loneliness, employment stability, food stability/security, housing stability/security, utility stability/security, transportation access, mental well-being, and health care access
- **Social isolation or loneliness (31.9%) and lack of social and emotional support (24.8%) were the most commonly reported measures. Both of which were far more prevalent among ethnic and racial minorities.**

# 2024 CMS Health Equity Conference

- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will host its annual [Health Equity Conference](#) from May 29-30, at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, Maryland.
- Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from CMS leadership on recent developments and updates to CMS programs; explore the latest health equity research; discuss promising practices and creative solutions; and collaborate on community engagement strategies.
- While in person availability has reached capacity, interested parties are encouraged to attend [virtually](#), and to join the in-person wait list.

# 2024 Global Loneliness Awareness Summit

- CESIL and the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine will host the **3rd annual Global Loneliness Awareness Summit**.
- When: **June 11th, 2024** (registration is now open)
- Where: **Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center, 555 Pennsylvania Ave, Washington D.C.**
- Coalition members are also encouraged to join us on Capitol Hill on **June 12th** to speak directly with policymakers about the need to address social isolation and loneliness.