



Wednesday, December 22, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and
Minority Leader McCarthy,

As Senator Ron Wyden has stated, “COVID-19 has laid bare the risks of abuse, neglect, and exploitation faced by vulnerable seniors.” For that reason, we write to express our support for Section 2047 of the BBBA, which provided for \$530,225,000 in grant funding opportunities over a series of years to fund medical-legal partnership programs that have been proven to protect seniors from these risks. Unfortunately, this language was removed by the Senate Finance Committee. We respectfully request, out of consideration for the dire need for these services, that you ensure that the provision continues to be part of the Build Back Better legislation.

Medical-Legal Partnerships (“MLPs”) for the elderly integrate the unique expertise of legal services lawyers into health care settings to help clinicians, case managers, and social workers address their patients’ needs. Lower-income older adults are especially in need of assistance with legal issues. While 56% of this population experienced a civil legal problem in the past year, 87% of those problems received either no professional legal help or inadequate help. MLPs can assist vulnerable seniors with advance care planning, financial planning, food insecurity, and fighting against elder abuse and exploitation. In one striking example of this successful interdisciplinary approach, a team at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System saw an almost 40% reduction in inpatients with prolonged hospitalizations over a six-month period. The reduction occurred after inpatient and outpatient services and lawyers began meeting weekly to brainstorm solutions for discharging older patients with complex needs.

The incredible need among our nation’s seniors, and the results that MLP programs achieve in fighting senior poverty, abuse, and exploitation, indicate why the House included Section 2047 of the BBBA, which included important funding for these programs. Yet this

proposed funding has been slashed by the Senate Finance Committee, and all support and mention of MLPs has been removed from the Act. We believe that was a mistake.

We thank you for your work to expand access to justice and fight for dignity and security for our nation's seniors, and we request that you ensure that Section 2047 is added back into the Build Back Better legislation introduced on the Senate floor. Please contact James Bhandary-Alexander with questions or concerns at james.bhandary-alexander@yale.edu or (203) 215-5345.

Respectfully,

Bethany Hamilton and Joel Teitelbaum
National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership

Sarah Hooper and Denise Watt
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