



April 30, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper:

The Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) represent counties and municipalities across the northwest region of our state. We serve as the federally designated Economic Development District for Region 11 and administer the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Northwest Colorado. On behalf of the rural communities we serve, we are writing to express serious concern regarding proposals in the draft FY2026 federal budget that would restructure Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and reduce funding for critical aging services.

This issue is of particular concern to our region given our demographic and economic realities:

- The Western Slope has historically had one of the oldest populations in Colorado, and the Colorado State Demographer projects that by 2030, residents aged 65 and older will comprise more than 25% of the population in many Northwest Colorado counties.
- Nearly 30% of residents in Colorado's 3rd Congressional District, which includes much of our region, are enrolled in Medicaid, highlighting the financial vulnerability of many of the older adults we serve.
- Inflation has intensified these pressures. Since 2022, food banks across our region have reported a 50% to 200% increase in seniors seeking charitable food assistance. Seniors who previously lived independently are now turning to food pantries and local nonprofits to help with basic needs, and waitlists for services like Meals on Wheels and in-home supports are growing for the first time.

Our communities are already seeing the real-world impacts of rising costs and limited resources. Seniors who never expected to need help are now relying on case managers to navigate housing, healthcare, nutrition, and transportation challenges. Without timely intervention and coordinated support, many of these individuals risk premature institutionalization, greater reliance on Medicaid-funded care, and serious declines in quality of life.

The draft budget splits administration of Older Americans Act (OAA) programs between the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and eliminates funding for critical services including State Health Insurance



Assistance Programs (SHIP), Aging and Disability Resources Centers (ADRCs), the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, and Adult Protective Services (APS). These changes would dismantle a unified, community-driven aging services system that has worked effectively for decades, replacing it with fragmented administration and risking service delays, inefficiencies, and loss of access for rural seniors.

We respectfully urge you to:

- 1. Ensure the Older Americans Act programs remain unified under a single agency structure that supports community-based, person-centered services, rather than splitting them between CMS and ACF.**
- 2. Protect funding for critical aging programs including SHIP, ADRCs, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, and Adult Protective Services, which are essential to supporting vulnerable seniors in rural communities.**

The Western Slope's commitment to caring for its seniors is strong, but local governments and nonprofits cannot shoulder this growing burden alone. Sustaining and strengthening the Older Americans Act programs is essential to ensuring that rural older adults can age safely, independently, and with dignity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We would be pleased to provide additional demographic data, program impact reports, or connect you with local aging providers to share more about the lived experience of our constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cody Davis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cody Davis,
Chairman
Associated Governments of
Northwest Colorado

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Overton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doug Overton,
Vice Chairman
Associated Governments of
Northwest Colorado

cc: The Honorable Jeff Hurd, U.S. House of Representatives