

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

To Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Senator Schumer, and Representative McCarthy:

On behalf of the nation's state and local Adult Protective Services (APS) systems, the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) urges Congress to include resources for APS in the next coronavirus emergency response package. While we applaud funding provided for the aging network and other services for older adults and people with disabilities in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and in the CARES Act, there has been no corresponding response to bolster APS programs' capacity to address abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults and younger adults with disabilities. APS services are more critical than ever before.

NAPSA represents APS programs and workers across the country. APS programs are the only mandated system in all states, DC, and the territories to respond to and conduct civil investigations of reports of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable older adults and people with disabilities. For years, APS programs have been increasingly overwhelmed with skyrocketing reports and cases, while receiving increasingly inadequate funding. The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated that need.

While we are grateful for the recognition of APS as part of the health care workforce by the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living, and recognition of APS – like Child Protective Services – as “essential critical infrastructure workers” by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, adequate funding is needed to follow through with this guidance. State and local governments' APS programs urgently need \$120 million to respond to abuse cases during the coronavirus pandemic and in the expected surge in reports during the aftermath. This funding would have a direct impact on local communities in all states.

As part of this funding, the most immediate need is to provide for personal protective equipment (PPE). While many states have directed APS workers not to have face to face meetings with victims, alleged perpetrators, and potential witnesses in the absence of PPE, unless there is an

imminent risk of harm; in other states, workers may still be required to have direct contact with clients. If the pandemic only lasts a few months more up to \$9 million in PPE will be required.

As a county APS administrator noted, “My 10 N95 masks is the exception to the rule. And that's 10 masks I did not have for a month of asking, till Monday, yes yesterday...and I'm told I'll get no more, and (we) typically do 90+ investigations monthly...PPE a huge need...(and my CPS colleagues seem to have more PPE, perhaps b/c of better stocking ahead of time; and they simply have more resources in general).” The same person noted, “That with 10 masks that is more than other counties [in our state]. Most APS programs have NO masks.” That is true of most APS programs across the country.

The second most immediate need as part of this funding is technology for APS to respond to and investigate reports remotely. Given the nature of APS work this includes the need for secure and confidential means of doing video conferences or other tools for home visits and investigations. A minimum of \$5 million is needed for appropriate technology.

Once the pandemic subsides and people are able to emerge from their homes, APS administrators across the country expect a surge in the number of reports and cases as has occurred in natural disasters. Research has shown that isolation is a major risk factor for abuse and the lack of regular interaction with outside family, friends, neighbors, and service providers exacerbates the risk and limits response. Moreover, states' mandatory reporting laws are far less effective during a shut-down. Reporters, such as physicians and other health care providers, social services workers, and banking and other financial services industry personnel, along with neighbors and family members, are the front-line for identifying potential abuse and reporting it to APS and law enforcement. These individuals have little to no contact with potential victims during a shut-down. Direct funding to states for APS is important to address the issue of abuse during the pandemic and strengthen their ability to react quickly to a surge in reports which will follow the easing of COVID-19 related restrictions.

Support for APS is fundamental to protecting vulnerable older adults and people with disabilities during this crisis and subsequent easing of restrictions. Federal funding of \$120 million for APS programs is a vital step to help members of our community who are being abused and exploited.

Thank you for your consideration.

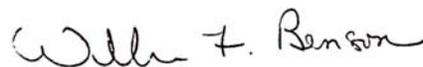
Sincerely,



Kathleen Quinn
President



Lori Delagrammatikas
Executive Director



William F. Benson
National Policy Advisor