

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As the subcommittee prepares the fiscal year (FY) 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill, we ask that you ensure the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) continues by robustly funding SCSEP at the U.S. Department of Labor.

SCSEP is the only federal job training program focused exclusively on helping older Americans return to the workforce. Through the program, low-income jobseekers, 55 years old or older, update their skills and contribute to their communities through paid, on-the-job training at schools, hospitals, senior centers and other non-profit or public facilities. Each year, 65,000 older workers representing all states and nearly all 3,000 U.S. counties and territories receive job training in their communities through SCSEP. In addition, the program strengthens communities through the extensive service hours performed by SCSEP participants. During the most recent program year, SCSEP exceeded its performance goals, including its entered employment and retention rates.

Older Americans often struggle to find jobs when unemployed, taking 40 weeks on average compared to 24 weeks for their younger counterparts. This period of long-term unemployment has disastrous effects on these Americans lives, both financially and emotionally. Coupled with a looming retirement savings crisis, where a majority of older Americans do not have nearly enough saved for retirement, it is crucial that we allow this program to continue as a lifeline for these workers.

Congress designed SCSEP to foster individual economic self-sufficiency and promote employment of SCSEP participants into unsubsidized jobs. As required by the Older Americans Act, 75% of SCSEP funds are used for wages for participants, who include veterans, individuals with disabilities, rural residents, and other most-in-need older Americans. Cuts to this program therefore directly harm these economically vulnerable Americans.

Please help to ensure job training for older workers continues by robustly funding the Senior Community Service Employment Program in FY 2018. Thank you.

Sincerely,