

September 3, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

We are writing to thank you for remaining such a strong champion for older adult fall prevention and the work of the Administration on Aging and the CDC/National Center for Injury Prevention and Control as they strive to embed evidence-based programs and services in communities across the country to reach the millions of seniors at risk. We are particularly grateful for your continued leadership in including a \$10 million allocation for elder falls prevention in the Prevention and Public Health Fund in the FY14 Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. We look forward to working closely with you and your staff to ensure that this funding is included in the final legislation.

Falls are a significant concern for Iowans, especially with the state's growing aging population. Falls are the second leading cause of all injury deaths in Iowa and the leading cause of death in those aged 65 and older, with the highest rates in those over the age of 84. For males, as age increased there was an increase in the proportion of patients needing other care (e.g. rehabilitation, long-term care, skilled nursing) or who died, particularly those aged 65 and older; for females, a similar pattern occurred in patients needing other types of care or died, however the proportion of those needing other care was higher.

The **Iowa Fall Prevention Coalition** is one of 42 state coalitions and initiatives collaboratively marshaling resources and energies to reduce falls and fall related injuries among priority populations to improve quality of life. Successes have been impressive given limited funding available to this effort: hosting a statewide Fall Prevention Planning Summit in June 2012; launching an informative falls prevention website with resources for professionals and public <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/FallPrevention/#sthash.0z3cfkhJ.dpuf>; publishing the state Fall Injury Report showing the impact of this growing issue; expanding dissemination of evidence-based programs and services; and promoting the education and training of health care and service providers.

Iowa is poised to expand its reach to more vulnerable populations and develop sustainability strategies but is in need of additional support. The Prevention and Public Health Fund resources would provide opportunities to truly make a difference in the lives of frail and vulnerable Iowans.

In the face of a rapidly aging population, we will need to redouble our efforts to help older adults and their families and caregivers recognize this public health issue and to take steps to reduce their risk of falling. Each year, one in three Americans aged 65 and over falls. Every 15 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a falls-related injury. The annual medical costs for treating these injuries are now over \$30 billion. This cost is projected to more than double to \$59.6 billion in 2020, costing Medicare over \$32 billion. Several evidence-based falls interventions have proven to be effective, with randomized control trials demonstrating reductions of 30% to 55%.

Seventy national organizations and professional associations have joined in this work as part of the Falls Free Initiative urging members to become active with their respective state coalitions and to enhance

practice and health care delivery skills. Yet as you know, they need help building these efforts into sustainable, integrated fall prevention systems and policies to reach growing numbers of older adults.

In the face of a rapidly aging population, we will need to double our efforts to help older adults and their families and caregivers recognize this public health issue and to take steps to reduce their risk of falling. Falls are not only detrimental to the health and quality of life of older adults but are increasingly affecting families, employers and even whole communities. Members of the Falls Free Initiative believe older adults should have access to effective programs and services to help them and their families take steps to reduce their risk and to remain independent and injury free.

Your continued support and perseverance is greatly appreciated across the nation as we struggle with the growing issue of falls among the elderly.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
American Academy of Audiology
American Association on Health and Disability
American Bone Health
American Geriatrics Society
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Society on Aging
Easter Seals
Gray Panthers
LeadingAge
National Association for Continence
National Association for Hospice and Home Care
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
The National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of RSVP Directors
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
PHI - Quality Care through Quality Jobs
Prevent Blindness America
Rebuilding Together
Safe States Alliance
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research
YMCA of the USA