

September 3, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

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.

In 2010, every day in Maryland about 77 adults aged 65 and older were treated and discharged from hospital outpatient centers (such as hospital clinics and emergency departments), and another 44 people were treated and hospitalized due to falls, making it the leading cause of injury-related hospital outpatient visits (28,224) as well as injury-related hospitalizations (16,161) for this age group in the state.

The **Maryland Falls Prevention Advisory Group** is one of 42 state coalitions and initiatives collaboratively marshaling resources and energies to reduce falls and fall-related injuries and deaths among older adults and to improve quality of life. Successes have been impressive given limited funding available to this effort. MD is poised to take these localized activities statewide: dissemination of evidence-based programs and services; education and training of health care and service providers; implementation of a home safety assessment and modification program for older adults transitioning home from a fall-related hospital admission; and strengthened collaboration with Johns Hopkins University in the CAPABLE Project, a demonstration to bring handymen, occupational therapists and nurses into the homes of 800 low-income seniors in Baltimore to test if some inexpensive repairs and strategies for daily living can keep them independent longer, and save millions in taxpayer dollars spent on nursing home care.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund resources would provide opportunities for Maryland to expand its reach to more vulnerable populations and develop sustainability strategies. 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.

America's seniors 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.

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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 Disabilityies  
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