September 25, 2017

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham

United States House of Representatives

214 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswomen Lujan Grisham:

On behalf of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO)—a coalition of over 70 of the nation’s non-profit organizations serving older Americans dedicated to preserving and strengthening the well-being of America’s older population—we are writing in support of the bipartisan Care Corps Demonstration Act of 2017 (H.R. 3493). We support this legislation to authorize grants for local volunteer workforce programs to train volunteers to provide non-medical, home and community-based care to those in need. This legislation, which bolsters the caregiving and health care work force needed to meet the demands of our rapidly aging population, would raise awareness of the needs of family caregivers and is an innovative solution to support families across the lifespan.

Over 43 million family caregivers provide much of our nation’s long-term services and supports (LTSS), permitting individuals of all ages to remain in their homes and communities, and avoid or delay more costly nursing home or foster care placements. Financial constraints, work and family demands, and the challenges of providing care place great pressure on family caregivers. The National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP study, *Caregiving in the U.S.*, found that most caregivers have been in their role for at least four years, and that caregivers who provide the most amount of care are twice as likely to have been in their caregiving role for 10 or more years. On average, caregivers spend 24.4 hours a week providing care to a loved one; this number jumps to 44.6 hours per week for those caring for a partner/spouse. Only about half of caregivers say another unpaid caregiver helps their care recipient.

In 2010, there were seven potential caregivers for every person over the age of 80. By 2030, that ratio is projected to drop by almost half, to 4:1. In the paid workforce the U.S. will need to add at least one million more direct care workers over the next ten years. Better support for family caregivers is critical because often it is their availability—whether they are family members or unrelated friends and neighbors who dedicate their time—that determine whether an older person can remain in his or her home. The economic cost of replacing unpaid caregiving is estimated to be $470 billion.

The Care Corps program places volunteers in communities where they provide essential, non-medical, long-term care services that help seniors and individuals with disabilities remain independent. The legislation provides volunteers with health insurance and other benefits during their time of service, along with an educational award that can be used to pay education costs or loans. This legislation proposes an innovative approach that will be important to addressing the challenge of unmet care needs for the growing number of older adults and people with disabilities in every community. We applaud you again for introducing The Care Corps Demonstration Act of 2017, and enthusiastically support this pioneering approach to filling the current and future caregiving gap.

Sincerely,