



Chairman's Opening Remarks November 5th Hearing

"The U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging will now come to order.

Today, we are once again talking about an incredibly important issue that affects millions of American seniors and their families: the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) and its impact on seniors with age-related conditions like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

The OAA is one of the most quietly impactful laws this country has ever passed.

It's the reason a senior in Naples gets a warm, home-delivered meal through Meals on Wheels.

It's the reason a daughter in Pennsylvania can take a few hours of respite after spending the night caring for her father with Alzheimer's.

It's the reason a man in West Virginia with Parkinson's can still get to his physical therapy appointment using transportation services.

And it's the reason senior centers across the country, including New York, can help coordinate all of these things to support older Americans and their families.

These are just a few examples of the faces of this law. When we talk about reauthorization, we are talking about protecting the people who raised us, served our country, built our communities, and now simply need a bit of our support.

Across the United States, more than 7 million older Americans are living with Alzheimer's, including more than 580,000 in my home state of Florida. Alzheimer's steals memories and independence, often turning spouses and children into full-time caregivers overnight.

Nearly one million Americans live with Parkinson's disease, which slowly robs people of movement, balance, and speech but not of their determination or dignity. Each year, about 90,000 new cases are diagnosed, and behind each one is a family learning to adjust, adapt, and persevere.

Behind each of these numbers is a caregiver—a husband, a wife, a son, or a daughter—providing care around the clock.

More than 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for people living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. Together, they give 19.2 billion hours of informal assistance valued at \$413 billion and that doesn't even include caregivers for Parkinson's, ALS, or other chronic diseases of aging.

These are people holding down jobs, raising children, and still finding time to feed, bathe, and comfort a loved one who depends on them. They do it out of love, and they deserve our support.

That is why the Older Americans Act is so vital. It works because it's not a big government approach. It's directing resources to local communities. It's neighbors helping neighbors.

In Florida, I have seen the impact firsthand through our Area Agencies on Aging, our senior centers, and the volunteers who deliver meals, install ramps, and check in on seniors who live alone.

For families living with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other age-related diseases, these programs are not luxuries – they're lifelines. They mean a hot meal, a safe home, a few hours of rest for a caregiver, or a ride that keeps someone connected to their community.

When we talk about reauthorizing the Older Americans Act, we are not just debating policy. We are renewing our commitment to America's seniors.

A commitment that in the United States, we will stand by our parents and grandparents as they age and that when disease or disability strikes, families will not have to face it alone.

Every service made possible by this law represents compassion made real.

That is what government should do: empower communities to care for one another and let them direct resources to meet their local needs because they understand their communities far better than anyone in Washington, D.C. does.

I have said it before, and I will say it again. Our seniors have spent their lives building and serving this country, and this bill is one way we ensure they continue to be supported, respected, and valued.

I am proud to be leading the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act this year with Ranking Member Gillibrand, HELP Committee Chairman Cassidy, and Ranking Member Sanders.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important legislation so we can continue to honor, protect, and care for America's seniors and the families who stand beside them each and every day."

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