



Chairman's Opening Remarks May 20th Hearing

"Every year, more than 14 million older Americans experience a fall. Many of them end up in emergency rooms across our great country.

Many seniors never recover and lose the independence they spent a lifetime building.

Falls are the leading cause of injury, injury-related hospitalization, and injury-related death for Americans over the age of 65. This isn't something we should ever accept as an inevitable statistic – it's a crisis we need to resolve.

The numbers behind this crisis are staggering. Non-fatal medical spending related to falls among older adults reached approximately \$80 billion in 2020.

With Medicare bearing the majority of that cost, and as our population continues to age, that number will only rise unless our country wakes up and addresses this issue head-on.

We're talking about tens of billions of dollars spent treating injuries that in many cases were preventable.

As bad as those numbers are, it's about much more than the budget. Every single one of those cases is an individual. This is about a grandfather in Florida who breaks his hip and never returns to his home.

It's about someone's grandmother who falls alone and waits hours before anyone finds her.

It's about families who worry if they're getting "the call" every time the phone rings.

Falls don't just injure people physically. They take an emotional toll, create fear, increase isolation, and cause a loss of confidence that accelerates decline.

Once a senior stops moving, stops going out, and stops engaging with their community, the consequences begin to compound.

That's because none of us were put on this earth to sit alone and stare out the window. We need family, friends, hobbies, and purpose. Those things are what make life worth living.

The good news is that nobody has to just accept this fate. There are solutions on the rise across the country.

Our incredible Area Agencies on Aging are on the front lines, delivering programs that work. Strength and balance training, home safety assessments, and medication reviews that identify high-risk drug combinations before they cause a fall are just a glimpse of what these organizations can do.

These are all proven interventions that save lives and help keep overall costs down.

I'm thankful for the work of the Administration for Community Living and the role the whole agency plays in supporting and scaling these efforts through a nationwide network of state and local partners.

The work the ACL and the AAAs do together is exactly the kind of federal investment that pays for itself many times over.

That's why I'm proud to be leading the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act with Ranking Member Gillibrand, Chairman Cassidy, and Ranking Member Sanders.

Alongside these OAA programs, technology is opening new doors we have never had before.

Remote monitoring systems, fall-detection sensors, predictive analytics, and smart-home platforms are changing what is possible in fall prevention and emergency response.

When a senior falls and no one is home, every minute matters.

Technology is cutting response times, reducing long-term complications and giving families everywhere peace of mind.

Let me be direct: The Older Americans Act is the foundational law governing community-based services for older Americans, and it is far past time Congress actually reauthorize it.

This hearing is an opportunity to continue building the record, documenting what is working, and identifying where gaps exist given the lapse in OAA reauthorization.

I want to thank our witnesses for taking the time to be here and for the work they do every day on behalf of older Americans."

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