

**Eldercare Workforce Alliance  
Outside Witness Testimony**

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives

March 13, 2013

Public Testimony<sup>\*\*</sup> Regarding Funding Requests for Eldercare Workforce Programs  
of the Department of Health and Human Services

Submitted on behalf of the  
Eldercare Workforce Alliance

By

Caitlin W. Connolly  
Project Manager, Eldercare Workforce Alliance

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Caitlin Connolly and I am here on behalf of the Eldercare Workforce Alliance, a coalition of 28 national organizations – representing health care professionals, including direct-care workers, as well as providers, consumers, and family caregivers. We joined together to address the immediate and future workforce crisis in caring for an aging America.

Roughly ten thousand Americans turn 65 every day - and will do so every day for the next sixteen years – and an unprecedented number of adults, 19 million, will be over 85 by 2050,

---

*\*\*The positions of the Eldercare Workforce Alliance reflect a consensus of 75 percent or more of its members. This testimony reflects the consensus of the Alliance and does not necessarily represent the position of individual Alliance member organizations.*

compared to an estimated 5.5 million today. Yet our workforce is ill-prepared to provide the unique care that is required by older adults.

As the Subcommittee begins consideration of funding for FY 2014, the Alliance\*\* urges you to provide adequate funding for programs designed to increase the number of health care professionals prepared to care for the growing senior population, as well as train the entire workforce, and support family caregivers in the essential role they play in this regard.

Today's health care workforce is inadequate to meet the special needs of older Americans, many of whom have multiple chronic conditions and cognitive impairments. It is estimated that an additional 3.5 million trained health care workers will be needed just to maintain the current level of access. Unless we expand training and educational opportunities, the workforce will be even more constrained in its ability to care for the growth in the elderly population as the baby boom generation ages. Reflecting this urgency, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has identified "enhancing geriatric/elder care training and expertise" as one of its top five priorities.

The geriatrics health profession training programs, administered through HRSA and authorized under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act, are integral to ensuring that America's health care workforce is prepared to care for the nation's rapidly expanding population of older adults. Title VII Geriatrics Health Professions programs are the only federal programs that seek to increase the number of faculty with geriatrics expertise in a variety of disciplines. These training programs, the Geriatric Academic Career Awards (GACA), Geriatric Education Centers (GEC), and Geriatric Training Program for Physicians, Dentists and Behavioral and Mental Health Professions Fellowships (GTPD), as well as the Title VIII nursing

program, Comprehensive Geriatric Education Program (CGEP), offer critically important training for the healthcare workforce overall to improve the quality of care for America's elders. In total, these programs provided training to more than 121,407 people in the 2010 -2011 academic year alone.

Of equal importance is supporting the legions of family caregivers who provide billions of hours of uncompensated care that allows older adults to remain in their homes and communities. Family caregivers can face physical, emotional, mental, and financial challenges in their caregiving role. The Family Caregiver Support program, authorized through Title III of the Older Americans Act, as well as the Alzheimer's Disease Demonstration Grants to States and Lifespan Respite Care programs, administered through the Administration for Community Living, offer crucial supports to older adults and their family caregivers. The estimated economic value of family caregivers' unpaid care was approximately \$450 billion in 2009. Without these federal programs, family caregivers helped by them may be unable to confront the challenges of their role.

To just maintain this level of training and support, we ask for \$42.1 million to support Title VII and VIII geriatrics health profession training programs and \$173 million for programs supporting family caregivers.

On behalf of the members of the Eldercare Workforce Alliance, we commend you on your past support for geriatric workforce and family caregiver support programs and ask that you join us in ensuring these programs continue to meet the needs of older adults at this critical time -- for all older Americans deserve quality of care, now and in the future.