



William Lamb, President
Sarah F. Wells, Executive Director
Ph: 202.332.2275
Fax: 866.230.9789
www.theconsumervoice.org

October 1, 2013

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Sanders, Harkin and Alexander:

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) commends you for your work on the bipartisan *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2013*. We support this critical legislation and are very pleased that it includes provisions to protect the rights and well-being of elders living in long-term care facilities, as well as those at home and in the community.

As you are aware, residents of long-term care facilities need effective advocacy in order to ensure that they receive the quality of care and quality of life they deserve and are entitled to by law. The purpose of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is to provide residents with access to such advocacy. The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2013* would strengthen and improve this program's effectiveness in a number of important ways. This legislation would clarify both organizational and individual conflicts of interest within the program; clarify that the State Ombudsman is responsible for the management of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, including the office's fiscal management; improve resident access to ombudsmen; better protect the confidentiality of ombudsman information; and ensure that State Ombudsmen receive ongoing training. We are particularly pleased that the Act would permit ombudsmen, when feasible, to continue to serve residents transitioning from a long-term care facility to a home care setting. Providing ombudsman services to these individuals would improve the transition process, ensuring that more consumers are able to live successfully in the community – where they want to be. Receiving services at home or in the community is not only the preference of consumers, it is also more cost-effective for both the states and federal government.

Furthermore, older adults receiving services and supports at home also deserve high-quality care and a good quality of life. The *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2013* would take an important step toward better ensuring quality home care by directing the Assistant Secretary to develop a consumer-friendly tool, when feasible, to assist older individuals and their families in choosing home and community-based services. Because this tool would focus on ways to assess how providers protect consumer health, safety, welfare, and rights, it would help older adults select the best possible providers.

The Consumer Voice thanks you and your staff for the hard work and dedication that led to the introduction of the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2013*. We look forward to continuing to work with you in support of this vital bill.

Sincerely,



Sarah Wells
Executive Director



Robyn Grant
Director of Public Policy & Advocacy

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.