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January 27, 2015

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

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Richard Burr
United States Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Alexander, Murray, Sanders and Burr:

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) commends you for the introduction of S. 192, the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015*. 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. S. 192, the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015* 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

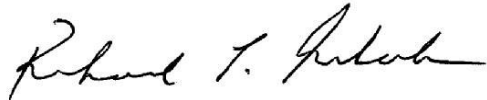
The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.

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, and provide consumers with an advocate to provide assistance and resources in the event challenges arise with their transition to the community. We would strongly encourage Congress to provide additional appropriations for Ombudsman Programs to enable them to extend their services to residents who are transitioning, as current funding does not support the additional time and resources necessary for effective advocacy by ombudsmen.

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 2015* 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 of 2015*. We look forward to continuing to work with you in support of this vital bill.

Sincerely,



Richard Gelula
Executive Director



Robyn Grant
Director, Public Policy & Advocacy