

March 21, 2016

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman, Committee on  
Education & the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Education & the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott:

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) is writing to express support of House Bill S.192, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2016. Consumer Voice is a non-profit organization that advocates for quality long-term services and supports with and on behalf of consumers in any setting.

The Older Americans Act (OAA), enacted in 1965, is the primary vehicle for services and funding that support the dignity and welfare of individuals age 60 and older in every state. These services include home-and-community based services; nutritional programs; health promotion and disease prevention activities for seniors; and programs that protect vulnerable seniors. Reauthorizing the Older Americans Act allows Congress to update and improve upon the law's vital programs and services and is critical to ensuring the future of the Act's essential programs.

In addition, House Bill S. 192 would strengthen the law's programs and services to better assist long-term care consumers. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is authorized under the Older Americans Act and administered at the state level. It provides residents of long-term care facilities with access to 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. House Bill S.192 would strengthen and improve this program's effectiveness in a number of important ways. It would clarify both organizational and individual conflicts of interest within the program; improve resident access to ombudsmen; better protect the confidentiality of ombudsman information; ensure that State Ombudsmen receive ongoing training; and permit ombudsmen, when feasible, to continue to serve residents transitioning from a long-term care facility to a home care setting. Furthermore, older adults receiving services and supports at home also deserve high-quality care and a good quality of life. House Bill S.192 would take an important step toward better ensuring quality home care by directing the Assistant

Secretary of Aging to develop a consumer-friendly tool, when possible, to assist older individuals and their families in choosing home and community-based services.

Consumer Voice strongly supports passage of this vital legislation and thanks you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Lori Smetanka in cursive script.

Lori Smetanka  
Executive Director

Handwritten signature of Robyn Grant in cursive script.

Robyn Grant  
Director of Public Policy and Advocacy