

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
186 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

We write to express our thanks to the Subcommittee for the \$6 million investment in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Holocaust Survivor Assistant Program, and urge support for including an increase to \$10 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. The Holocaust Survivor Assistant Program is a timely and necessary program that responds to a bipartisan public policy priority to assist Holocaust survivors and now other diverse aging populations impacted by trauma.

Between 30,000 and 60,000 Holocaust survivors live in the United States today – most aged 85 or older and an estimated one-third living in poverty. After witnessing the darkest period of the last century and demonstrating the resiliency of the human spirit, survivors built a new life in the United States, raised families, and enriched our country. As a group, Holocaust survivors are subject to increased risk of depression, social isolation, and extremely poor outcomes associated with institutionalization, which can trigger the traumas experienced during the Holocaust. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these conditions.

Administered by the Administration for Community Living, the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program established a Center for Aging and Trauma, which leverages public-private partnership opportunities with nonprofits, foundations, and the private sector to address the urgent needs of the survivor population and the nonprofit organizations and family caregivers that support them. The work of the Center has led to the development of innovative Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed (PCTI) approaches that can ameliorate increased risks.

PCTI care is a holistic approach that promotes the dignity, strength, and empowerment of trauma victims by incorporating knowledge about the role of trauma in victims' lives into agency programs, policies, and procedures. It combines the core principles of person-centered care (e.g., self-determination, choice, empowerment, and individual preference) with the core activities of trauma-informed systems espoused by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Since the program's inaugural year in FY 2015, over 400 different PCTI based programs have been implemented through the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program. Most are designed to reduce isolation among survivors. Others target their physical, mental, and cognitive health. Several programs train professionals (e.g., physicians, dentists, lawyers, social workers, nurses,

and home health care workers), volunteers, and family caregivers on how to provide PCTI care. In its first five years, the program served more than 28,000 unique Holocaust survivors, more than 5,000 family caregivers, and nearly 15,000 professionals and volunteers at social service agencies that provide services to Holocaust survivors.

The Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program remains a critical lifeline for survivors, their families, and providers. Due to its success, the program is now beginning to assist other aging adults who also have been exposed to traumatic events, including emotional and psychological harm due to historical violence and oppression, systemic abuse, and other injustices. There is great potential for its application as nearly 90 percent of older adults in the United States have been exposed to traumatic events, including aging military veterans, first responders, victims of childhood and domestic violence, refugees, and survivors of man-made or natural disasters. Aging survivors of the COVID-19 pandemic can be added to the list.

As the nation ages, we should promote new approaches to understand and treat the long-term impact of trauma on older adults. It is critically important that we robustly fund the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program, particularly as it expands to help both Holocaust survivors and other older adults with a history of trauma. Consistent with this mission, the program requires \$5 million to build on previous advances serving the Holocaust survivor population, and an additional \$5 million to further embed person-centered, trauma-informed approaches to care in all parts of the aging services network, which is now one of the objectives of the Older Americans Act.

While we understand the current fiscal constraints, we urge you to prioritize this cost-effective innovative initiative to support Holocaust survivors and other older adults with a history of trauma in FY 2023. We look forward to working together to ensure that older adults can live in dignity, comfort, and security in their homes and communities for the remainder of their lives.


Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



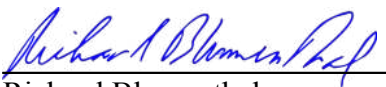
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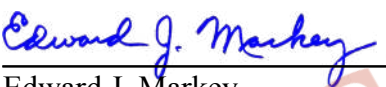
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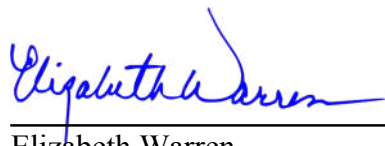
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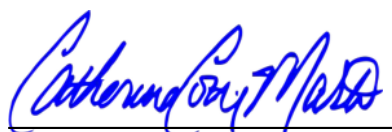
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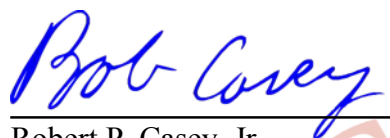
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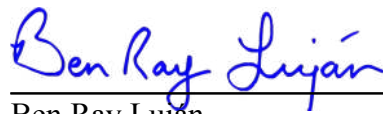
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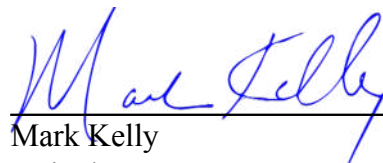
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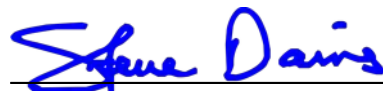
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