

## Sample Action Alert Text for Positive Aging Act

**Below is a Sample Action Alert to Organizational Members:**

### **WHY IS THIS REQUEST IMPORTANT?**

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce passed a bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (H.R. 5293) on May 17. While Committee leaders inserted some mental health language, they failed to include vital mental health provisions derived from the Positive Aging Act (S. 1116/H.R. 2629).

Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) has been working with key members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce to encourage the inclusion of essential mental health language in the bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

The Senate is expected to introduce a companion bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act shortly and Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Susan Collins (R-ME) are working with key members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions to encourage the inclusion of important mental health provisions from the Positive Aging Act.

Now, these congressional champions need our assistance in garnering support for the inclusion of this mental health language. Therefore, we need you and your colleagues to contact your legislators immediately.

**BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE:** The Positive Aging Act is a bipartisan piece of legislation co-sponsored by Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Susan Collins and Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL). This legislation would provide grants for the screening and treatment of mental health disorders in older adults. Since 2002, members of the mental health and aging community have been working with congressional sponsors to enact this important legislation and have recently been urging Congress to include this mental health language in the bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

*If you use CapWiz, you may consider taking the current bill sponsors off of the automatic e-mail list, and include the text below to explain this to your members:*

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Constituents of Senators Clinton (NY), Collins (ME), Inouye (HI), and Lieberman (CT) and Representatives Kennedy (RI), Ros-Lehtinen (FL), Bishop (NY), Brady (PA), Cummings (MD), Jackson-Lee (TX), Leach (IA), McDermott (WA), McKinney (GA), Nadler (NY), Owens (NY), Price (NC), Stark (CA), and Wasserman Schultz (FL) will find that they are not able to send messages to these legislators. This is because they are already co-sponsors of this legislation.

**Below are Sample E-mails to members of Congress:**

**Senate version:**

As a constituent, I am writing to urge you to support the inclusion of vital mental health language from the Positive Aging Act (S. 1116/H.R. 2629) in the bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act. This language would authorize grants to states for the development and operation of systems for providing mental health screening and treatment services to older individuals who lack access to such services.

Nearly 20% of seniors have a mental health problem, such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive impairment. These disorders can have a significant impact on both physical and mental health, including increased physical illness and disease, disability, and mortality. In fact, older adults currently have the highest rates of suicide of any age group in the U.S., and depression is its foremost risk factor.

For these reasons, I ask you to support the inclusion of this vital mental health language and urge you to contact the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and urge them to include this language in the bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

**House version:**

As a constituent, I am writing to urge you to include mental health language proposed by Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) in the Senior Independence Act (H.R.5293), the bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act. The Davis mental health language, which is derived from the Positive Aging Act (H.R. 2629), would provide grants to states for the development and operation of multidisciplinary systems for the delivery of mental health screening and treatment services to older adults who lack access to such services.

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