

Date:

Name:

Address:

City, State Zip:

To whom it may concern:

I want to tell you about a senior named Mary, from Portsmouth, OH. Mary entered the VANTAGE program in 2016. She was at risk of homelessness and hadn't worked since 2010. She was ready to get back into the workforce, and VANTAGE's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) was able to help her. She was assigned to a training site at her local Metropolitan Housing Authority where she trained as an office participant for 2 years. During that time, she was able to take classes offered through the VANTAGE Training Specialist to help boost her Word, Excel, Customer Service, and basic computer skills. She was looking diligently for unsubsidized employment and, with SCSEP's support and training, she found a position with her local library. This new position meets her needs for a part-time position while she can utilize her customer service skills and computer skills she improved upon during her training with SCSEP.

Mary is one of many SCSEP success stories from VANTAGE Aging's SCSEP program. Nationwide, SCSEP is an important way to help low-income older Americans become economically self-sufficient. In 2016, VANTAGE SCSEP alone provided job training to 1,097 SCSEP participants, over 3,000 hours of training, and over 14,000 people with access to resources such as job postings, resume development, and research. Additionally, the local nonprofit and government agencies VANTAGE partnered with received over 600,000 service hours from VANTAGE SCSEP participants. When programs like this are supported, the entire country can find success.

As you work on the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, please consider the impact of this program. SCSEP provides on-the-job training that plays a critical role in helping unemployed, low-income individuals, 55 years and older, develop employment-driven skills and relevant work experiences. Each year, about 60,000 older adults from every state and congressional district receive part-time, on-the-job training through community service assignments. At a time when the number of older Americans is growing by 10,000 a day, I urge you to reject proposals to cut or eliminate this vital service and ask you to consider investing in SCSEP at no less than \$463.8 million in your FY 2020 bill.

**SCSEP is made of a diverse group of senior participants.**

- 66% are women
- 12% are veterans
- 36% are over age 65

**Each individual enters the program with one or more barriers to employment.**

- 24% have a disability
- 58% are homeless or at-risk of homelessness
- 26% are living in an area that is rural
- 19% have persistent unemployment

Every worker in SCSEP increases his or her economic self-sufficiency, one of the program's two mandated goals, through the paychecks they earn during their community training. While each SCSEP participant enters the program with, on average, three significant barriers to employment, approximately one in every two SCSEP participant's transitions into unsubsidized employment, the program's other mandated goal. Of the thousands who find employment each year, 7 in 10 remained fully employed one year after exiting the program. A recent Urban Institute study, "The Role of SCSEP in Workforce Training for Low-Income Older Workers," found that "the benefits of SCSEP outweigh the costs," with participants earning more in the first year of unsubsidized employment than the program invested in them. An earlier independent program evaluation also concluded that, in addition to preparing individuals for employment success, SCSEP was "increasing the overall quality of life of low-income elders who are having difficulty meeting their financial needs." SCSEP participants are low-income older adults. They work hard to avoid qualifying for Medicaid or delay their access to Social Security by trying to work longer. If these individuals did not have access to SCSEP, many would turn to other social assistance which has a higher cost without the benefits to communities that SCSEP provides.

It is my hope that after reading this information and learning of the monumental impact SCSEP makes on the lives of older adults and communities as a whole, you will advocate for a SCSEP funding level of at least \$463.8 million – the current level called for by Congress in the last bipartisan reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

Thank you for your consideration as you continue work on the FY2020 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,