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HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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PROVIDENCE 3, R. I.

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D. C.**

July 17, 1958

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to you on behalf of my bill, H.R. 9822, which provides for a White House Conference on Aging to be preceded by preliminary conferences on aging within each of the States. Congressman Wier, on behalf of the Subcommittee on Safety and Compensation, has reported this bill to the whole Committee on Education and Labor. I earnestly hope that you will support action to recommend this bill to the House so that it may receive favorable consideration at the earliest possible moment.

I think you will agree that the rising number of old people represents one of our most pressing problems and one we must face up to without further delay. Our older population now stands at above 15 million. Each year 1 1/4 million of our citizens reach age 65 and there is an annual net increase of more than 300,000 in this part of our population. These people are living today because of our vast improvements in nutrition, public health, and medical care. For all too many of them, however, longer life has few, if any, rewards. Many of them, - your constituents and mine, are striving to live on incomes below the level of decency, often in the worst of our slum neighborhoods; are struggling against the disabilities of long-term chronic disease; and are wasting away their years in boredom, inactivity, and isolation.

We in the Congress have exercised leadership in setting up the Social Security program; in providing funds for medical research, hospital construction and rehabilitation; in encouraging opportunities for employment, and offering some assistance in building low-cost housing. We can be proud of the record but we must also recognize that it has not been good enough. The need for additional measures is evident from the fact that well over 600 bills have been introduced on behalf of older people during the present Congress. The urgency of the situation is brought home to us with every mail from our districts.

I have given long and intensive study and thought to this whole situation. I believe that we need to make progress in meeting the needs of older people much more rapidly than we have been doing. I believe the Federal Government has more responsibility than it has been exercising but I believe also that we have a right to expect much more from the States and from all of the communities throughout the land. A few States are taking vigorous action in setting up programs for their older people. Many more have signified their intention to do so. Some seem scarcely to have recognized the existence of their older citizens.


H.R. 9822 represents a down-to-earth approach to this whole matter of aging. The bill would make available an amount not to exceed \$50,000 to each State to enable it to collect necessary information about its older people, to discover the major gaps in its programs for its older citizens, and to enable it to hold one or more statewide conferences for the purpose of developing sound blueprints for action and for getting action under way. I firmly believe that the States are looking to us for leadership and that by providing this incentive to action we can stimulate them to move ahead without delay.

The Fogarty bill proposes also that representatives of the States shall be brought together in a national White House Conference on Aging to hammer out a national program based on the recommendations arrived at within the States. This conference should be held prior to June 30, 1960, after the States have made their studies, and not during the present year as the bill now states.

The total cost of this program, including funds for assisting the States and organizing the conference, would not exceed \$3,500,000. This, I may point out, is less than 25 cents per older person in our population today, - surely a modest amount in view of the returns we may expect to obtain on their behalf.

Whatever we are able to accomplish toward improving the conditions of living for the elderly today will create a better society for the 35 to 40 million middle-aged people in our population who will some day be old. A few weeks ago I reminded our colleagues in the House that this group includes many of us and our children along with those we represent. We have a clear responsibility, I believe to help create conditions which will make the added years of life healthy, comfortable, useful, and satisfying for all of these as well as for the 15 million who are already old. If we do so, I am sure they will feel that we are acting wisely on their behalf. It is for these reasons and for the total welfare of the country that I solicit your support of H.R. 9822. I hope very much that we can obtain quick action by both Houses of the Congress during the present session.

Sincerely yours,

  
John E. Fogarty  
Member of Congress

Honorable Graham A. Barden, M.C.  
Chairman, House Committee on  
Labor and Education  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.