March 25, 2019

The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
United States Senate
448 Russell Senate Office Building
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC  20510

Dear Senators Portman and Cantwell:

AARP is pleased to endorse the Ensuring Medicaid Provides Opportunities for Widespread Equity, Resources, and Care Act (EMPOWER Care Act, S. 548). We appreciate your bipartisan leadership on this important legislation to help more older adults and people with disabilities live in the community. AARP, with its nearly 38 million members in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps empower people to choose how they live as they age, strengthens communities, and fights for the issues that matter most to families, such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

The vast majority of older adults want to live independently in their homes and communities, and the services and supports that help them do so are cost-effective. More than a decade ago and with bipartisan support, Congress authorized the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Rebalancing Demonstration Program. Since MFP’s creation, it has helped transition over 88,000 Medicaid beneficiaries out of nursing and other facilities into the community in more than 40 states and the District of Columbia. MFP’s noted benefits include improvements in quality of life, quality of care, and community integration for participants, as well as savings to Medicaid and Medicare. States have also used MFP to help build important infrastructure and greater capacity to serve people in the community. MFP has been part of state efforts to balance their funding more toward home and community-based services in Medicaid.

Congress has acted in the past to extend MFP, most recently in January, but Congressional action is once again needed to extend this important program. We are pleased to support your legislation that would extend and authorize funding for MFP through Fiscal Year 2023, while also making improvements including accountability and sharing of best practices. In addition to extending this important program, it is also vital...
for Congress to pass legislation before March 31 to extend expiring Medicaid spousal impoverishment protections for home and community-based services, another important piece of helping individuals to live in their homes and communities.

Thank you again for your continued leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle to enact this important legislation. If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Rhonda Richards of our Government Affairs team at rrichards@aarp.org or 202-434-3770.

Sincerely,

David Certner
Legislative Counsel & Legislative Policy Director
Government Affairs