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Congress of the United States
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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
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(VICE RANKING MEMBER)
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE,
AND TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

September 8, 2025

Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer
U.S. Department of Labor
Office of the Secretary
200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20210

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer and Director Vought:

I write to you today to express deep concern about the delay in Program Year 2025 funding allocations for Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) national grantees. This delay directly impacts 271 low-income older Americans in Northeast Ohio and tens of thousands nationwide who rely on SCSEP for vital job training, financial support, and opportunities to re-enter the workforce. I ask that you allocate these funds for SCSEP grantees as soon as possible.

SCSEP is a community service and work-based job training program for low-income, unemployed seniors. SCSEP participants gain work experience in a variety of community service activities at non-profit and public facilities, including schools, hospitals, day-care centers, and senior centers. The program provides over 40 million community service hours to public and non-profit agencies, allowing them to enhance and provide needed services. Participants work an average of 20 hours a week and are paid the highest of federal, state or local minimum wage. This training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants. SCSEP includes age, income, and employment requirements to ensure that funds go only to those who need the program the most.

To fulfill their important work, SCSEP grantees rely on the Department of Labor's (DOL) timely release of the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) which provides planning instructions and allotments for SCSEP state, territorial, and national grantees. SCSEP funds are typically obligated for expenditure by the start of each Program Year (PY), July 1st, as intended by the Older Americans Act (OAA). Although the PY25 TEGL for state and territorial grantees was published on July 1, 2025, DOL has still not published a TEGL for national grantees and has not provided a timeline for its publication.

Due to the delay by DOL in issuing the official guidance and grant awards for PY25, SCSEP

grantees, including seven in Ohio, have been forced to pause participant activities effective July 1, 2025. While DOL has indicated that SCSEP is expected to be funded through June 30, 2026, the absence of official documentation and the delay in the release of funds has already prevented many grantees from continuing operations beyond June 30, 2025.

Unfortunately, the delayed funding has already paused job training for seniors in my community. Ninety-six older adults in Ohio who are striving to overcome employment barriers have suddenly lost access to critical training opportunities and the modest wages they depend on to meet basic needs such as food, housing, medications, and transportation. Beyond the immediate financial toll, this disruption also undermines the progress they have made toward self-sufficiency and threatens the structure and purpose SCSEP provides.

The impact of delayed funding goes beyond SCSEP participants. SCSEP trainees offer millions of crucial service hours to community organizations, helping deliver millions of crucial service hours to community organizations, helping deliver vital resources to local communities. Without SCSEP trainees, the overall ability to meet community needs decreases significantly.

I respectfully request that the SCSEP Training Funding and Employment Guidance Letter be released as soon as possible. Prompt and timely action is crucial to avoid further hardship for our participants and to ensure the continuity of this invaluable program and the essential community services they support.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and your continued support of older Americans in my community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emilia Strong Sykes', with a stylized, flowing script.

Emilia Strong Sykes
Member of Congress
13th Congressional District of Ohio