

Help Aging Holocaust Survivors Live with Dignity and Security: Support the Holocaust Survivors Assistance Fund

From: The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Sent By: sarah.arkin@mail.house.gov

Date: 3/26/2014

Help Aging Holocaust Survivors Live with Dignity and Security

Support the Holocaust Survivors Assistance Fund Request

L-HHS Appropriations

Deadline : March 31, 2014

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in supporting \$5 million in FY 2015 for the Holocaust Survivors Assistance Fund through the Administration for Community Living. This fund will help ensure that Holocaust survivors are able to live in dignity, comfort, and security in their homes and communities for the remainder of their lives.

There are approximately 113,000 Holocaust Survivors living in the United States today – with an estimated 30,000 living in poverty. After witnessing and surviving the darkest period of the last century and the resiliency of the human spirit, Survivors built a new life in the United States, raised families, and enriched our country. Now they are aging and becoming increasingly frail. Their average age is 82, but nearly one-quarter are age 85 or older.

As a group, Holocaust Survivors are at increased risk of depression, social isolation, and extremely poor outcomes associated with nursing home admissions. Removal from one's home results in the loss of autonomy, independence, and control over one's daily life, which for Survivors has the potential to trigger psychological impacts from experiences in the Holocaust. Survivors learned long ago to fear and mistrust doctors, white coats, or uniforms because of their terrifying experiences with Nazi soldiers and medical experiments. Unfamiliar showers are particularly traumatic to Survivors of concentration camps because of the gas chambers disguised as showers. Some Survivors may resort to hiding food in their rooms, insecure about if and when their next meal will come. Even socially adjusted Survivors who have adapted well their entire lives in America may experience these triggers later in life, especially if compounded by dementia or Alzheimer's. Without immediate community support, impoverished Holocaust survivors are at risk of this trauma.

The new Holocaust Survivor Assistance Fund would leverage public-private partnership opportunities in a 3:1 ratio with nonprofits, foundations, and the private sector to address the unique needs of the Survivor population. The fund would be administered through Section 411 of the Older Americans Act, in accordance with input from the Special Envoy for U.S. Holocaust Survivor Services, to provide an array of supportive services necessary to age in place. Services may include meals, case management, Alzheimer's care, psychological and psychiatric counseling, adult day care, support groups, family caregiver support, transportation, information and referral, spiritual or chaplaincy programs, socialization programs, home care and assistance with chores in the home, wellness programs, home modifications, assistance with medical equipment and medications, and dental services.

We hope that you will join us in signing the attached letter. If you would like to cosign the letter, please contact Sarah Arkin with Representative Wasserman Schultz at sarah.arkin@mail.house.gov or (5-7931) or Eddy Acevedo with Representative Ros-Lehtinen eddy.acevedo@mail.house.gov (5-5021) by March 31, 2014.

Sincerely,

DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Jack Kingston, Chairman

Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education

Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education

Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kingston and Ranking Member DeLauro,

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2015 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations bill, we write to express our strong support for including \$5 million in funding for the creation of a Holocaust Survivor Assistance Fund at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as requested by the Administration for Community Living. This is a timely and necessary program that responds to an immediate bipartisan public policy priority, and would target a leverage of 3:1 private to public dollars.

There are approximately 113,000 Holocaust Survivors living in the United States today – with an estimated 30,000 living in poverty. After witnessing the darkest period of the last century and the resiliency of the human spirit, Survivors built a new life in the United States, raised families, and enriched our country. Now they are aging and becoming increasingly frail. Their average age is 82, but nearly one-quarter are age 85 or older. As a group, Holocaust Survivors are at increased risk of depression, social isolation, and extremely poor outcomes associated with institutionalization, which can be emotionally and physically devastating for Survivors as a trigger of the traumas of forced institutionalizations and relocations during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Survivor Assistance Fund would leverage public-private partnership opportunities with nonprofits, foundations, and private sectors to address the urgent needs of the Survivor population and the non-profit organizations that support them. Leveraged with philanthropic dollars, the fund would be administered through Section 411 of the Older Americans Act, with input from the Special Envoy for U.S. Holocaust Survivor Services, to provide an array of supportive services necessary to age in place. Without immediate action on behalf of these Survivors, we risk losing them to the very things they should never have to face again - eviction, hunger, inadequate medical care, loneliness, social isolation, and despair. It is the goal of this unique private-public partnership to ensure that no Survivor is ever put in that position. While we understand the fiscal constraints under which you are working, we urge you to prioritize this innovative initiative to support Survivors in Fiscal Year 2015. We look forward to working together to ensure that Holocaust survivors are able to live in dignity, comfort, and security in their homes and communities for the remainder of their lives.

Sincerely,