

**Statement of
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**Joint ETA -AoA Listening Session
On Reauthorizing Title V of the Older Americans Act
April 26, 2010**

Thank you, Assistant Secretaries Oates and Greenlee, for convening this first-ever listening session on Title V.

As a national SCSEP grantee with 81 local subgrantees in 16 states, we are ready to assist the two Departments to work together on a wide range of joint efforts. We need both One Stop career centers and area agencies on aging to increase their commitment, expertise, and capacity to better serve older adults with employment and training needs. The reauthorization of both WIA and the Older Americans Act can help achieve this goal. We also hope that ETA considers working with AoA on a joint letter similar to ETA's earlier joint letter with the Administration on Children and Families about summer youth employment.

In my three minutes, I have two main points:

1. Let's reaffirm SCSEP as a person-centered aging program that also has workforce and community service goals.
2. Let's explore how WIA might increase its service to larger numbers of older adults and clarify the appropriate coordination between SCSEP and WIA.

On my first point, let's embrace SCSEP as a person-centered aging program. For too long, it's my opinion that the Department of Labor has held a too-narrow view of SCSEP as strictly and only a workforce development program, even after the 2006 Older Americans Act reauthorization inserted a "Sense of Congress" that clearly stated otherwise.

SCSEP has more than one mission, just as senior nutrition programs do more than reduce hunger and food insecurity. Like nutrition programs, SCSEP promotes the socialization and well-being of older individuals. It improves the health as well as economic security of thousands of vulnerable older adults primarily by providing subsidized jobs and work that's meaningful. SCSEP's person-centered approach and multiple missions argue for keeping SCSEP under the Older Americans Act and administered by USDOL.

But we need to reconsider SCSEP's performance measures. What outcomes would reaffirm and improve SCSEP's performance as an aging program? How can we use the latest research in gerontology to suggest possible performance measures for SCSEP focusing on health and self-efficacy in addition to job placement outcomes?

We also may need to re-examine the relationship of WIA common measures and SCSEP performance. We think it has produced mixed results, at best, after reviewing the

aggregate performance of all SCSEP grantees since Program Year 2004. We recommend that the Departments consider returning to the DOL practice prior to 2004 of setting one goal for service level and unsubsidized placement rate for all national and state grantees.

An expanded view of SCSEP as more than a workforce program suggests other revisions to Title V. For example, we recommend that SCSEP participants who leave to enter another community service program (such as SeniorCorps or AmeriCorps) be considered a positive outcome. We also recommend a total overhaul of Section 502e so that Pilot, Demonstration, and Evaluation Projects promote collaborations between SCSEP, the aging services network, national and community service programs, as well as workforce programs. How can 502e encourage new kinds of subsidized jobs so SCSEP participants can help address unmet community needs or better support the aging services network? Too often it seems, SCSEP participants are undervalued not only because of their age, but also due to their race, gender or education.

On my second point, let's explore how WIA might increase its service to larger numbers of older adults and clarify the appropriate coordination between SCSEP and WIA. Reports by GAO and others have documented that WIA has served relatively small numbers of older workers of all incomes and educational levels. We deeply appreciate how Assistant Secretary Oates has been speaking directly and candidly about how WIA is under-serving individuals disadvantaged in the labor market. Our nation needs both an expanded SCSEP as well as a WIA program that serves growing numbers of older Americans who will need or want jobs. We support Secretary Oates's efforts to implement WIA performance measures in a way that reduces "creaming." This can form the basis for rethinking how best to coordinate SCSEP and WIA and avoid unnecessary duplication.

For more than four decades, SCSEP has done a good job of serving older adults and the aging network. But SCSEP – along with all programs under the Older Americans Act and WIA – will need to move from good to great to meet the challenges and opportunities of our aging nation.

We will continue to explore possible refinements and improvements to Title V with our subgrantees and others, and will share them with ETA and AoA.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in today's session.