

Dorothy M. Hutchins
Testimony before the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
March 7, 2024

Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Cassidy, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. It is an honor to be testifying from my home in Alexandria, Virginia, today.

My name is Dorothy Hutchins. In July, I will be 94 years old. I live alone, but am blessed to have a large supportive family. I have 5 children, 17 grandchildren, and 27 great grandchildren.

I started my career in the 1952 as a young geologist, part of the Women's Auxiliary Geologists at the time with the US Geological Survey. I wrote "Gem stones of the United States" under my maiden name, Dorothy Schlegel, in 1956. One highlight of my career was mapping the Verde quadrangle in the deserts of Arizona. When my husband passed away in 1973, I retired from geology and stayed home with my family.

I have benefited from services under the Older Americans Act since the early 1990s. I attended two different local senior centers, Lincolnia in Alexandria and Bailey's in Falls Church, and was able to drive myself. At the senior centers, I would play bridge, take exercise classes, eat lunch with my peers, and participate in events on holidays and special occasions. The work they do is so important and should be available to all seniors.

I stopped attending the senior centers during COVID. During that time I found out that I was eligible to receive meals delivered to my home. On Thursdays, six frozen dinners and six lunches are delivered to my home. The same young woman from Peru comes every week and we chat a little. The food meets my needs and is sometimes more than I can eat in one sitting.

I fell and hurt my hip in January 2021 and had surgery one week later. After rehab I came home and walked with a walker. Almost exactly one year later I fell again and had another surgery and rehab. I have had to be very cautious since my falls. I don't wear shoes in my home, I wear a life alert around my neck, and only shower when someone is in the house with me. I am fortunate to receive occupational and physical therapy in my home.

I've since stopped driving and can no longer attend the senior centers. I do get a little lonely. I lost my husband early in our marriage and am an only child. Most of my friends are dead. I have one friend in Syracuse in a senior living community, but she pays \$8,000 each month and I can't afford that. I used to go to church every week, but I don't go to church anymore in person. I am able to watch it on my tablet though.

I stay busy and I like to learn. I have a friend across the street who brings me his New York Times and Wall Street Journal every day and I get the Washington Post. I have plenty to read. I also do the crosswords and watch a lot of TV every day, too.

I have been in my home for 61 years. Thanks to my family's support and the services provided to me by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, I am able to be independent and continue to live in my own home. I am also blessed not to have serious health problems.

Everyone deserves the chance to live where they choose, and for most of us we want to remain in our homes and communities. The services provided under the Older Americans Act make that possible for me and many other seniors. I hope that Congress will continue to support this important work.

Thank you and I'm happy to answer your questions.