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**Region IV Area Agency on Aging CEO testifies in front of U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging**

**Outlines ways Congress can better support programs assisting older workers**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A special committee of the United States Senate heard testimony Thursday morning from experts from across the country.

Among them were Region IV Area Agency on Aging CEO Christine Vanlandingham who spoke about the barriers to job entry or re-entry faced by older job seekers, the services RIVAAA provides to help overcome those barriers, and ways congress can better support older job seekers.

The hearing, "*Beyond the 9 to 5: Dismantling Barriers and Building Economic Resilience for Older Workers*," before the Senate Special Committee on Aging was livestreamed to watch in its entirety at [www.aging.senate.gov](http://www.aging.senate.gov).

Vanlandingham testified, "Changes in the age distribution of the U.S. population make older workers an increasingly important part of the total available workforce. Participating in the labor market – even at an older age – has a positive impact on social cohesion and self-rated health and is a critical component of financial wellbeing. But older Americans face significant barriers to job entry or re-entry."

Barriers AAAs across the country see most often are inadequate technology skills and insufficient broadband access to apply for jobs online, lack of a professional network to help find job opportunities, caregiving duties, and most predominately, pervasive age discrimination experienced during the job search process.

"These challenges must be faced head-on if, as a nation, we want to encourage economic self-sufficiency, to promote staying engaged as we age and to offer all workers equal opportunities to contribute. It is not just the right thing to do for older workers: it is also the fiscally prudent one," Vanlandingham told the committee.

To address these challenges, Region IV Area Agency on Aging supports low-income older adults in their quest to gain economic security through career planning, employment barrier identification and

remediation, technology education, job search and job placement assistance, on-the-job training, caregiver supports, and a campaign to tackle ageism head on.

Vanlandingham testified that in reducing barriers and investing in older workers, our society and our economy can tap the significant amount of social capital that is older workers' knowledge and experience, while gaining a stronger, more diverse workforce that stands ready to help address today's workforce shortages. Tapping older workers strengthens the local economies in which these workers participate, helps reduce social isolation and combats impoverishment

The AAA's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) connects older adults who have fallen out of the workforce to on-the-job training while working, allowing them to be more competitive in their search for unsubsidized employment.

The AAA's Computer Learning Center at the Campus for Creative Aging provides older adults opportunities to take basic to advanced-level computer literacy classes for free. These classes are taught by a wide age-range of volunteers who are subject experts in things like Apple iPhone, Microsoft Excel and Zoom.

The AAA's caregiver support programs enable working caregivers to continue in their caregiving role while employed and supports caregivers seeking to re-enter the workforce.

The Senate Special Committee on Aging was first established in 1961 and was granted permanent status in 1977. While special committees have no legislative authority, they can study issues, conduct oversight of programs, and advance important causes.

Thursday's hearing will inform national strategies to reduce barriers for older job seekers, strengthen current services, and explore the replication of local best practices.

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#### About Region IV Area Agency on Aging

Region IV Area Agency on Aging is a private, not-for-profit corporation. Established in 1974 for the business of developing age supportive commerce and services, it plays a major role in planning, funding, and delivery of a host of services. Empowerment and independence of community members are driving themes behind its efforts. Designated by the State of Michigan to receive federal Older Americans Act funds for planning and development, the agency manages an array of government contracts for service delivery in southwest Michigan. Its primary service area includes Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. For more information about the RIVAAA, visit [www.areaagencyonaging.org](http://www.areaagencyonaging.org)