The need for long-term services and supports (LTSS) presents a growing financial burden on care recipients, their families, and state Medicaid budgets. Strategies for addressing this problem pose both a policy design and a political challenge. This presentation assesses current LTSS policy directions and politics -- specifically, the movement to constrain, rather than enhance, federal financing for LTSS and the counter pressures necessary to strengthen meaningful insurance protection. While the political environment has become even less conducive to expansion of public benefits, the underlying problem of LTSS financing will grow and persist. And politics change. Thus, choices need to be made that bridge the political divide, including development of a new public-private partnership based on a public program to cover "back-end" or catastrophic costs, plus measures making private insurance more attractive for the "up-front" risk, an approach that has recently been endorsed by a number of bipartisan groups.

THE HOUSING CHALLENGES OF LOW-INCOME OLDER ADULTS AND THE ROLE OF FEDERAL POLICY

R.I. Stone, *LeadingAge, Washington, D.C., District of Columbia, United States*

Adequate housing is critical for low-income older adults who face affordability and accessibility challenges affecting their quality of life, health and ability to live independently in their communities. This presentation examines the federal policy role in meeting the housing and housing-related needs of the low-income elderly population. The availability of publicly subsidized units and vouchers is woefully inadequate. Although access to affordable and accessible housing options has been a growing challenge for several decades, the Trump administration and Republican-majority Congress has an agenda and specific budgetary, administrative and legislative proposals that would worsen the housing situation today and into the future. The aging of America over the next two decades and the lack of investment in affordable senior housing and related programs requires a Call to Action for stakeholders in the public and private sectors to jointly develop a comprehensive national senior housing policy agenda and implementation strategy.

POLICY RESPONSES DURING THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO OLDER PEOPLE'S GROWING ECONOMIC RISK EXPOSURE

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Economic risk exposure especially through increased labor market volatility and growing caregiving responsibilities has risen for older Americans. At the same time, key protections such as unemployment insurance and Social Security have declined, while other protections, particularly in the private market are limited or non-existent. In virtually all instances, the Trump administration has already moved to weaken existing protections. And, it has offered either no proposals or very limited proposals to increase protections in the private sector, for instance, by offering households tax deductions for caregiving costs. This approach would

largely benefit higher-income households and offer few or no benefits to low-income and middle-income households. As a result, an aging population will increasingly face rising economic risks on their own.

THE GOP'S TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN HEALTH CARE: THE STAKES FOR OLDER AMERICANS

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The transformation of the American health care system is at the forefront of the Republican agenda. This presentation reviews Republican-led efforts to repeal the health insurance coverage provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), institute block grants or spending caps in Medicaid, and adopt vouchers for purchasing private insurance under Medicare. It also analyzes the implications of the Republican tax reform bill signed by President Trump which, in fact, repealed the ACA's individual mandate and reduced federal tax revenues by \$1.5 trillion dollars over 10 years, possibly resulting in future reductions in spending on Medicare and Medicaid. It points out that older adults have emerged as perhaps the most important population group impacted by the GOP's health care agenda, both because of their dependence on Medicare and Medicaid, and because it was they who bore the brunt of the failures of the pre-ACA U.S. health insurance patchwork.

SESSION 2190 (SYMPOSIUM)

LONELINESS IN RURAL AREAS—LEARNING FROM RESEARCH, PRACTICE AND LIFE

Chair: R. O'Sullivan, *Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Belfast, Dublin*

Co-Chair: L. Holley, *University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska*

Discussant: C. Ford, *University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama*

The issue of chronic loneliness has been described as the new epidemic affecting modern society. The association between loneliness with poorer health outcomes has been well established. However, the specific issue of those reporting loneliness in rural areas has received less attention and debate. This symposium illustrates the challenges faced by seniors in rural settings in both the USA and Europe. It shines a spotlight on environmental, gender, housing, LGBTQ community, as well as mental health in rural areas in a bid to increase understanding, debate and discussion. The symposium aims to answer the question: are there particular characteristics of rural loneliness that may have implications for public health and community practice? Burholt and colleagues use data from the UK (rural Wales) to examine individual and situational risks for social loneliness and emotional loneliness. While Maiden et al in the USA study