Program stakeholders were happy to provide the following testimonies regarding the Institute of Gerontology:

Kenneth So, Program Director, Asian and Pacific Islander Senior Center: The Asian/Pacific Islander (API) has always been an underserved segment of the population, especially in D.C., unfortunately because of the language barrier. We are the only organization in D.C. to serve API seniors. The whole API population is relatively underserved; there are only three of us at the API Senior Center who serve more than 300 members. Other programs for API seniors were forced to close down because of funding.

Ms. Denise Richardson, Senior Companion: Ending or cutting this program would not be fair to the seniors, because they need more programs, not less. There are seniors in my neighborhood that could use some help. There are husbands taking care of their wives as best they can, where, if they needed to run out to the grocery store or take care of bills, then that person would have a little freedom to do those things....If anything, funds should be found so that more people could be helped by the program or that the program could be extended so that caregivers could work longer days and take care of two seniors per day, instead of one. That way, it would help more people. People are living longer now and those people do not have anyone to care for them, especially those with out of state families or relatives with demanding jobs and they need someone to be there for them.

Ms. Cornelia Mack, Senior Companion: I love everything about the Institute of Gerontology. The services are needed and I hope the programs are not cut. You would be surprised how many older people are alone with nobody to help them out. It takes time to build a relationship with someone you trust, and that's what the Senior Companion and Respite Aide programs do. And they look forward to these visits. They might be their only visitor in the whole week. We don't need this program to be cut! The majority of the seniors have worked hard all of their lives, and now find themselves being forgotten. And to have someone to come in that cares and has a passion for this kind of work? It's needed.

Ms. Irma Walker, Bodywise participant: After a personal tragedy, I could not open my mouth wide enough to eat properly – for seven years. I was exercising with Tawana for almost a year before I felt comfortable enough to share my problem. She taught me the
proper mouth exercises to do every day, and one day after six
months of doing the exercises, my mouth opened up wide.
After seven years, I was able to open up my mouth and eat!

I didn’t use to like exercising. Since I’ve been exercising, I don’t
feel like I always need to see the doctor as often, because I
feel good and I feel younger. By exercising, it helps me a
whole lot; especially my mind and body. My doctor told me he
was glad I was in this program. Most of the elderly like to
watch TV all of the time—why not exercise at the same time?

One time, I fell on the floor. But because of the upward
mobility exercises she taught us, I didn’t panic. So I crawled from the bathroom to the
living room and pulled myself up using the sofa! I can also reach up, down and back—
things I couldn’t do before exercising.

I don’t feel like I’m 77- I feel like I’m 50! I’m going to be jitterbugging after a while!