



March 4, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Scott and Minority Leader McCarthy and Ranking Member Foxx:

On behalf of Meals on Wheels America, the nationwide network of community-based senior nutrition programs and the individuals they serve, we write to urge House passage of the “Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020” as soon as possible. This bipartisan, bicameral agreement to reauthorize the Older Americans Act for five years was unanimously approved by the Senate on March 3, 2020 and amends H.R. 4334, the Dignity in Aging Act that passed by voice vote in the House last fall. We commend the leadership of the key Committees, as well as their staff for the hard work and commitment to reaching this compromise legislation, and we are pleased to endorse it.

Since 1965, the OAA has been the primary piece of federal legislation focused on establishing, coordinating and strengthening home- and community- based social and nutrition services for adults 60 and older and their families. OAA services like Meals on Wheels, transportation, caregiver assistance, senior employment and training and elder rights protection are just some of the vital functions the OAA provides to 11 million seniors annually.

As you and many of your colleagues have witnessed firsthand, OAA services and supports – including the three nutrition programs authorized under Title III of the Act – help keep our nation’s most vulnerable, isolated and food insecure seniors healthier and in their own homes and communities longer. This, in turn, delays and/or prevents altogether the need for more expensive institutional care often paid for through Medicare or Medicaid. OAA programs are not only extremely cost-effective, but they are also longstanding examples of public-private partnerships that save taxpayer dollars at the local, state and federal levels in terms of reduced healthcare expenditures.

We strongly support the authorized appropriations increases contained in this legislation. With nearly half of our Meals on Wheels programs having a documented waiting list for nutrition services, the 6% increase in authorization of funds through Fiscal Year 2024 for OAA programs will significantly improve the senior nutrition network’s ability to close these service gaps.

We further appreciate recognition of the significant impact of OAA nutrition services and the steps taken to strengthen them in this final compromise reauthorization bill. Provisions that advance

research and data – including capturing the unmet need and scope of waiting lists for congregate and home-delivered meals – and increased focus on culturally appropriate and medically-tailored meals, malnutrition, and the negative health consequences of social isolation are key priorities of our organization, among others.

Accordingly, we urge the House to swiftly pass the “Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020” to help better meet the inherent changes in our country’s aging population and serve more of those in need. Meals on Wheels America and the nationwide network of senior nutrition programs have been proud to contribute feedback and policy recommendations throughout this reauthorization process and look forward to continuing to work with you to build upon the ongoing successes of the OAA.

Thank you again for your leadership and support for our nation’s older adults.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Ellie Hollander". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellie Hollander
President and CEO

cc: Chairwoman Suzanne Bonamici and Ranking Member James Comer
House Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services

Chairman Lamar Alexander and Ranking Member Patty Murray
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions