



September 13, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Blunt and Ranking Members Leahy and Murray:

In your consideration of FY 2019 appropriations, we call on you to honor the growing needs of our nation's aging population, particularly those most vulnerable, and to build upon the bipartisan support that exists for Older Americans Act (OAA) Home-Delivered and Congregate Nutrition Programs. Thousands of community-based senior nutrition programs across the country serve millions of individuals each year. We ask you to adequately fund these socially and economically effective programs by **further increasing funding for OAA Nutrition Programs by \$100 million over FY 2018 levels, for a total of \$996.7 million in funding for FY 2019.**

Despite the much appreciated and warranted down payment provided to OAA Nutrition Programs in the FY 2018 omnibus, the need for more funding remains— and continues to escalate. Currently one in five Americans is 60 or over, and an additional 18 million people will join the senior ranks between 2020 and 2030. We must adapt to this dramatic demographic shift with smart, foresighted policy changes, including allocating the funding necessary to serve this growing population.

As is, local senior nutrition programs are overwhelmed trying to stretch existing resources to keep pace with the current demand. The OAA network overall is serving 16 million fewer meals to seniors in need than it was in 2005, while 83 percent of food-insecure seniors and 83 percent of physically-impaired seniors did not receive meals through OAA programs, but likely needed them. These statistics point to a massive lack of resources in the field already.

We continue to make the case that increasing funding for senior nutrition programs delivers a powerful return to seniors and taxpayers alike. **OAA Nutrition Programs currently take up less than one-tenth of one percent of the total discretionary budget, even with the increases provided in FY 2018;** meanwhile, Medicare and Medicaid costs climb year over year. Providing meals designed specifically for seniors' nutritional needs can reverse this trend. For example, Meals on Wheels clients report fewer falls, which cost our nation \$50 billion annually in medical expenses, of which \$28.9 billion is billed directly to Medicare. Furthermore, Medicaid spends \$54.8 billion annually on nursing home care, but with increased funding for meals, more seniors can remain at home, driving this cost down significantly. In fact, the National Survey of OAA Participants indicates that 65

percent of congregate and 92 percent of home-delivered meal recipients say these programs enable them to continue living in their homes and out of costly healthcare facilities.

Now is a critical and opportune time to protect and strengthen these programs, for the health of seniors and our entire nation. As you consider appropriations for FY 2019, we strongly request that you fund the OAA Nutrition Programs at the level of \$996.7 million.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Blancato
Executive Director
National Association of Nutrition and
Aging Services Programs (NANASP)



Ellie Hollander
President and CEO
Meals on Wheels America

Contact Information:
1612 K Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006
202-682-6899
www.nanasp.org

Contact Information:
1550 Crystal Drive, Suite 1004
Arlington, VA 22202
703-548-5558
www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org