



December 16, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Special Committee on Aging
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Casey
Ranking Member
Special Committee on Aging
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Alexander and Collins and Ranking Members Murray and Casey:

On behalf of Meals on Wheels America, the nationwide network of community-based senior nutrition programs and the individuals they serve, we write to express our support for S. 3057, the Modernization of the Older Americans Act Amendments, and for the important step it represents toward reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA). We commend the efforts of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the Special Committee on Aging to develop and negotiate this bipartisan legislation and Senators Susan Collins and Bob Casey for its introduction.

For over five decades, the OAA has been the primary piece of federal legislation focused on establishing, coordinating and strengthening community- and home-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 more than 11 million seniors annually.

As you and many of your colleagues know 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 7% increase in authorization of funding levels in Fiscal Year 2020 – and 6% in subsequent years for all OAA programs through the reauthorization period – will significantly

improve the senior nutrition network's ability to close these service gaps. We also appreciate recognition of the significant impact of OAA nutrition services and supports and the steps taken to strengthen them through provisions in the bill by advancing research and data, attending to the need for culturally appropriate and medically tailored meals, and focusing on the negative health consequences of social isolation and malnutrition.

Furthermore, this legislation incorporates efforts to clarify the process of transferring funds between Title III C1 and C2, with specific attention to consultation at the regional and local levels, and provides for an impact study aiming to capture the unmet need and scope of waiting lists for congregate and home-delivered meals. Each of these provisions are key priorities for our organization, and we urge they be included in any final bill.

We encourage continued bipartisan and bicameral negotiations to produce a final reauthorization bill that helps better meet the inherent changes in our country's aging population and serves more of those in need. Meals on Wheels America and the network of senior nutrition programs across the country have appreciated contributing 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, public service 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: Chairman Michael Enzi, Subcommittee on Primary Health and Retirement Security
Ranking Member Bernie Sanders, Subcommittee on Primary Health and Retirement Security