



May 7, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman, Appropriations Committee and
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Members Granger and Cole:

On behalf of our two organizations, the national network of local senior nutrition programs we represent and the millions of older adults they serve, we thank you for your longstanding leadership and support for the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-C Nutrition Program. We are sincerely grateful to the Committee for its work to provide much-needed federal funding to our network through annual appropriations and in the critical emergency COVID-19 relief legislation enacted over the last year to sustain pandemic response efforts. As you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, we ask you to continue to support these programs by **increasing funding for the OAA Nutrition Program to a minimum total of \$1,903,506,000**. Our specific line-item requests are:

- **Congregate Nutrition Services** (Title III C-1) – \$965,342,000
- **Home-Delivered Nutrition Services** (Title III C-2) – \$726,342,000
- **Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)** (Title III) – \$211,822,000

This appropriations increase will provide a necessary investment in resources needed for the network to address the current demand for essential nutrition services and help ensure that America's older adults can continue to live safely and independently in their homes and communities.

For nearly five decades, and through the COVID-19 pandemic, local nutrition programs have been working to effectively promote the health, independence and well-being of older Americans by reducing hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; promoting socialization; and improving the overall health of the seniors they serve. The OAA Nutrition Program serves as a successful public-private partnership in communities and generates a powerful social and economic return on investment for older adults and taxpayers alike.

Prior to the pandemic, nearly 9.7 million seniors were already threatened by hunger and one in four was lonely, creating a situation in which many local programs across the country had to place older adults on waitlists for services.^{1, 2} The pandemic shed further light on the existing and growing need for nutritious

¹ J. Ziliak & C. Gundersen, *The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2018*, an annual report prepared for Feeding America, 2020. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research/senior>

² AARP, *Loneliness and Social Connections: A National Survey of Adults 45 and Older*, 2018. <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2018/loneliness-social-connections.html>

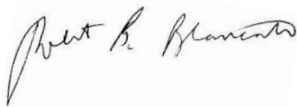
meals and social connection provided by senior nutrition programs, and highlighted that current appropriation levels are inadequate. In a survey of Meals on Wheels America membership in November 2020, nearly nine in 10 local senior nutrition programs reported unmet need for services in their community, and almost as many expressed the belief that the new individuals they have been able to reach over the past year and half would continue to need services long-term.³ Increased funding for FY 2022 will help ensure that the older adults who require these services will receive them and not have to return to waiting lists.

With a steep rise in requests for senior nutrition services since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, providers represented by our collective memberships have consistently reported that funding is the primary factor impacting their ability to serve all eligible individuals. Senior nutrition programs additionally face increased costs of providing services to more older adults, including food, transportation and staffing, as well as an ongoing need for personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety and cleaning supplies. Ultimately, disinvestment in vital aging services that address hunger, malnutrition and loneliness will lead to otherwise avoidable visits to the Emergency Room, hospitalizations and premature nursing home placements, increasing healthcare costs and unnecessary suffering. Increasing appropriations and supporting maximum funding flexibility for OAA nutrition services will allow the network to not only better address the growing pre-COVID need, but to sustain adequate levels of service to those added to their rosters and reach more older adults who may benefit from receiving this vital lifeline.

As the Committee determines appropriations levels for FY 2022 and continues to address the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, **we urge you to provide, at a minimum, \$1,903,506,000 in funding for the OAA Title III-C Nutrition Program.** The emergency relief funding provided since the onset of the pandemic last year has been central to addressing the need that arose through the pandemic, but a far more substantial increase is necessary through regular annual appropriations legislation to adequately meet the growing demand that existed before COVID-19. This requested funding will ensure these critical programs that sustain the health, independence and overall well-being of America's older adults have the resources to serve more seniors in FY 2022 and in the years to come.

Thank you for your action and consideration of our request and for your leadership and commitment to our nation's seniors.

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
571-339-1622
www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org

³ Meals on Wheels America, *COVID-19 Impact Survey*, research conducted by Trailblazer Research, 2020