



February 12, 2024

The Honorable Linda Sánchez
2428 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Linda Sánchez:

On behalf of Meals on Wheels America and the more than 5,000 community-based programs across the country that are dedicated to addressing senior hunger and isolation, we write to express our support for *H.R. 2692, the Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults Act of 2023 (Addressing SILO Act)*. We commend you for your leadership in introducing this legislation and look forward to working together to achieve enactment this year.

With the U.S. Surgeon General's advisory in May 2023 declaring loneliness and social isolation an epidemic, we believe that now is the time for Congress to take critical steps to address this urgent public health crisis and that community-based programs are an integral part of the solution. For more than 50 years, Meals on Wheels programs in every state and congressional district have been delivering nutritious meals, social connection and safety checks to millions of older adults in greatest social and economic need and have the ability to reach more provided the resources.

The *Addressing SILO Act* would leverage community-based organizations, like Meals on Wheels, and Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to tackle social isolation and loneliness among older adults by establishing additional support for grants and training programs. Several studies show the highest rates of social isolation are found among older adults, putting this population at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease and even death. Additional research demonstrates that social isolation among older adults leads to \$6.7 billion in excess Medicare costs each year. Through the funding and support provided in the *Addressing SILO Act*, local organizations with expertise in reaching older adults would have the ability to foster social connections and more to enable older adults to maintain their health, independence and ability to age in their own homes and communities. And these programs can do this all while saving taxpayers through reductions in Medicare and Medicaid costs.

Again, we thank you for your commitment to our nation's older adults and working towards the goal where no one is left hungry or isolated in America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ellie Hollander'.

Ellie Hollander
President and CEO

CC: House Committee on Ways and Means Chairs and Ranking Members