



OLDER AMERICANS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) is an opportunity to strengthen and preserve the Act's original intent and core purpose to **reduce hunger, promote socialization, and improve health and well-being for older adults in greatest social and economic need.**

Any policy changes must first and foremost do no harm to the aging services network and the seniors they support. Rather, they must address the pervasive and growing challenges of senior hunger and social isolation. We believe reauthorization should also build on the newly updated OAA regulations by continuing to modernize the law and reflect the on-the-ground needs of service providers, older adults, and their families and caregivers. Accordingly, Meals on Wheels America urges Congress to enact the following recommendations:

- 1. Increase authorization funding levels for all OAA programs and provide additional resources for enhanced nutrition services.**
 - Increase authorized funding, including sufficient funding for Title III Nutrition Services, to address existing waiting lists and reach the ever-growing number of older adults who would benefit from OAA programs.
 - Authorize new funding streams and establish incentives for senior nutrition programs to offer medically tailored and/or culturally appropriate meals and expand reach in underserved areas.
 - Improve and clarify authorization of funding for senior nutrition programs to maintain and invest in the infrastructure and resources needed to prepare and deliver services, including kitchen equipment, delivery vehicles, labor, etc.
- 2. Unify OAA Congregate, Home-Delivered and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program into a single Title III-C Nutrition Program.**
 - Create one authorized funding stream to remove administrative burden, improve efficiency and enable community-based organizations to more easily tailor nutrition services to seniors' needs.
 - Codify alternative nutrition services models, such as grab-and-go and drive-thru meals, proven to reach more older adults struggling with hunger and social isolation.
 - Modernize the Nutrition Services Incentive Program through enhanced partnership and coordination with USDA, HHS, states, Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and local providers to procure commodity foods for preparing OAA meals and coordinate other important federal benefits and programs for seniors.
- 3. Prioritize community-based nutrition programs and experienced network providers in OAA grant awards and contracts.**
 - Encourage states and AAAs to partner more closely with and leverage senior nutrition programs' established infrastructure, dedicated volunteer base and experience serving their communities to deliver nutritious meals, socialization services and safety checks to more older adults.
 - Ensure timely payment and reimbursement processes for nutrition services provided.
- 4. Expand senior nutrition program capacity and infrastructure support for further integration into the health care system.**
 - Reduce administrative and regulatory burdens on local nutrition and aging services providers seeking to establish contracts and partnerships with health care providers and payors.
 - Provide additional resources and promote incentives for the aging services network to build the capacity, including infrastructure and technology, to meet the compliance and privacy standards for providing covered health care benefits.
- 5. Promote innovations and successful practices learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.**
 - Facilitate continued innovation and implementation of many successful practices leveraged during the COVID-19 public health emergency, including new partnerships, programming, emergency preparedness and outreach.
 - Support the expansion of evidence-informed and/or technology-based solutions that can help meet the needs of seniors, including their preferences for meals and social connectedness.

For more information, please contact the Meals on Wheels America Advocacy Team at advocacy@mealsonwheelsamerica.org.