



November 14, 2023

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

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

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Granger and Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As federal funding for FY 2024 is being finalized, **we urgently request a minimum allocation of \$1,284,385,000 for the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-C Nutrition Program within the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill.** This program, backed by a history of bipartisan support, fosters a successful public-private partnership that enables the delivery of more than 251 million nutritious meals annually to older adults facing hunger and isolation and is deserving of increased federal resources this year.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, Congress recognized the inherent value and necessity of these nutrition and socialization services and subsequently enacted \$1.6 billion in supplemental emergency funding for OAA nutrition providers to be able to meet the demand and address new challenges and those exacerbated by the pandemic. Without a funding level of \$1.284 billion in FY 2024, however, thousands of older adults will certainly fall victim to a funding cliff and reduced access to the meals and companionship they urgently need.

Research has demonstrated the positive impacts of OAA congregate and home-delivered meals on the health and well-being of older adults while also resulting in cost savings for taxpayers. Yet, these evidence-based programs require sufficient funding to fulfill their mission to reach older adults in the greatest social and economic need. As is, local programs report that:

- 73% are facing higher demand for home-delivered meals than before the pandemic.
- One in three has a waiting list, forcing seniors to wait, on average, three months for vital meals.
- 97% believe there are seniors in their community who need meals who they are not currently serving.
- 91% require increased funding to address inflation and rising costs.

The deep federal funding cuts being threatened in FY 2024 appropriations bills would cause further personal and direct harm to those older adults who rely on and need services. In fact, we receive numerous stories from programs across the nation highlighting the growing need in their communities, the failure of current funding to keep pace, and the dire consequences that federal spending cuts have already had on their programs and the individuals they serve. Below are a few examples:

- **From Texas, we heard...**
 - “Already facing funding difficulties due to the increased demand the pandemic brought for our services and the phasing out of additional COVID-related funding, these funding cuts would severely impact our ability to deliver meals and necessitate reduction in number of clients we could serve. We have already reduced from 400 to 260 due to unfunded meals. We would need to reduce further.”
 - “The waiting list is growing. I have calls every day wanting to be served by Meals on Wheels. I have to refer them to the state waiting list. It has been several months since new clients were added even though I have had several on state funding die. Everyone is waiting to see what funding is going to be available.”

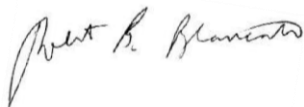
- **From Connecticut, we heard...**
 - “If the funds are reduced for the Title III C grant, we will have to limit the number of individuals we can provide meals to, limit the number of meals provided, look at the possibility of reducing the number of days the congregate sites are open.”
 - Another senior meal provider in Connecticut reported that their Department of Nutrition is facing a 60% budget cut due to the proposed FY 2024 budget. They emphasized that “funds are vital to maintain our current program operations and to avoid a waitlist of thousands vulnerable and hungry, homebound elderly clients across Hartford County.”

- **From Alabama, we heard...**
 - “With the loss of COVID funding, we were unable to provide meals to new clients for eight months this year. This equated to more than 400 people in need of meals in our service areas alone being unable to receive them. We also had to discontinue breakfast, which many clients thoroughly enjoyed, and this also reduced the amount of things like milk clients relied on. Many seniors do not have the means or ability to grocery shop, especially with ever-increasing grocery prices and limited food stamps.”

The timing and critical need to adequately fund congregate and home-delivered meal programs could not be more pressing for those older adults struggling with hunger, isolation and/or loneliness. **That’s why we urge you to provide at least \$1.284 billion for the OAA Nutrition Program in FY 2024 and are committed to working together to strengthen these vital programs and meet our obligation to properly invest in and deliver for our most vulnerable.**

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our nation’s seniors and your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Blancato
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cc: Members of the House Appropriations Committee