



## 2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. **Reauthorize and strengthen the Older Americans Act (OAA), the primary piece of legislation supporting nutrition and social services for individuals age 60+ and their caregivers.** Our nation's senior population is growing exponentially, leaving more seniors at risk of hunger and isolation. A timely reauthorization of the OAA that focuses on the needs of seniors today and in the future is essential to fulfilling the purpose of the Act – to assist vulnerable older adults live independently in their homes and communities.
2. **Fund the OAA Nutrition Program at a total level of \$1 billion in FY 2020, an increase of nearly \$93M above current levels.** This includes the Home-Delivered, Congregate and Nutrition Services Incentive Programs that together exist “to reduce hunger and food insecurity, promote socialization and delay the onset of adverse health conditions for seniors.”<sup>1</sup> Federal funding for these programs has failed to keep pace with the escalating need, leaving 8 out of 10 low-income, food insecure seniors without the home-delivered meal services that they likely require.<sup>2</sup>
3. **Maintain existing funding levels, at a minimum, for the Social Services, Community Services and Community Development Block Grants in FY 2020.** Local Meals on Wheels programs use a hybrid funding model based on the needs and resources of the communities they serve. Because OAA funding covers less than 40% nationally of the total cost to provide nutritious meals, safety checks and friendly visits to seniors, federal block grants are a vital funding component that offer many programs the resources that enable them to reach more individuals in need.<sup>3</sup>
4. **Support legislation allowing nutrition services provided by a community-based organization to be a covered benefit under all Medicare and Medicaid plans.** Community-based nutrition providers offer more than just a meal. The combination of nutrition, opportunities for socialization and connections to other critical community services all help support the health and well-being of seniors. For about the same cost as one day in the hospital, a senior can receive home-delivered meals for an entire year, contributing to substantial savings in taxpayer dollars, as well as keeping seniors in their communities and out of unfamiliar and costly hospital settings and nursing facilities.<sup>4</sup>
5. **Enhance charitable giving incentives and assistance for 501(c)(3) organizations under the tax code.** A true public-private partnership, Meals on Wheels programs rely on their charitable standing – for both revenue from private donations as well as savings from their exempt status. As federal funding does not provide for the full cost of offering critical nutrition and social supports to our nation's at-risk seniors, a tax code that protects status, revenue through charitable giving incentives and volunteer base is critical to the success and sustainability of the Meals on Wheels network.
6. **Eliminate the threat of sequestration in FY 2020 and adopt a bipartisan plan that raises budget caps and recognizes the cuts already made to non-defense discretionary programs, like Meals on Wheels.** These vital OAA programs, which represent less than one-tenth of one percent of total discretionary dollars, save substantial taxpayer dollars by keeping seniors healthier and independent in their own homes and communities. Adequate funding for the OAA Nutrition Program – now and in the years to come – that accounts for inflation and growing demand will ensure that seniors in need receive these critical nutrition services that support health and well-being and reduce healthcare expenditures. *Achieved; Bipartisan Budget Act passed into law August 2019 (P.L. 116-37).*

## REFERENCES

1. The Older Americans Act of 1965 as amended by P.L. 114-144, 42 U.S.C. §§3001 et seq.
2. U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Older Americans Act: Updated Information on Unmet Need for Services* (Washington, DC: GAO, June 2015), available at <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-601R>
3. Administration for Community Living, Aging Integrated Database (AGID) Data Source: State Program Reports (SPR) 2016, available at [www.agid.acl.gov/DataGlance/SPR](http://www.agid.acl.gov/DataGlance/SPR)
4. Meals on Wheels America, *2018 United States Fact Sheet: Delivering So Much More than Just a Meal*, available with sources and methods at <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/facts-resources>