THE ESCALATING PROBLEM OF SENIOR HUNGER AND ISOLATION

UNITED STATES 2020

OUR NATION’S SENIOR POPULATION IS GROWING EXPONENTIALLY

1 IN 5 AMERICANS is 60 or older

With 12,000 more turning 60 each day

Average life expectancy today is 79 years

This population is set to reach 93M in the next decade, with 118M expected by 2060 – increasing the number of seniors today by more than half

LEAVING MORE AND MORE AMERICANS AT RISK OF HUNGER AND ISOLATION

Before the Coronavirus Pandemic, nearly 9.7 million seniors were threatened by hunger.

5.3M of whom were food insecure or very low food secure.

1 in 4 seniors lives alone

2M Very Low Food Secure

5.3M Food Insecure

9.7M Marginally Food Insecure

1 in 4 feels lonely

Due to COVID-19, we know that an even greater number of older adults are experiencing food insecurity, and many seniors are lonelier than before the pandemic.

AND WHILE HUNGER AND ISOLATION CAN AFFECT ANYONE WITH LIMITED MOBILITY AND DECLINING HEALTH, FINANCIAL STRAIN MAKES THEM MUCH WORSE

Nearly 7.4 million seniors have incomes below the poverty line.

That’s an income of $240 a week or less, which, after housing, utility and medical expenses, leaves very little for food.

Half of seniors living alone lack the financial resources to pay for basic needs.

Older adults living in poverty are nearly twice as likely as those living above poverty level to have limitations in their ability to live independently.

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HUNGER AND SOCIAL ISOLATION NOT ONLY JEOPARDIZE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OLDER ADULTS; THEY ALSO PLACE A SIGNIFICANT STRAIN ON OUR COUNTRY’S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AND ECONOMY

The economic burden associated with malnutrition in seniors

Older adult falls cost about $50 BILLION in medical costs

Among seniors, the additional Medicare expenditures associated with social isolation are estimated to cost $6.7 BILLION each year

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FEDERALLY SUPPORTED NUTRITION PROGRAMS – LIKE MEALS ON WHEELS – ARE DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS, YET THESE SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS REMAIN SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERFUNDED, EVEN AMID EFFORTS TO COMBAT COVID-19

Among older adults who have difficulties with daily activities, 2 OUT OF 3 receive limited or no home- or community-based care

BEFORE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, 83% OF LOW INCOME, FOOD INSECURE SENIORS WERE NOT RECEIVING THE MEALS THEY NEEDED

AND SENIORS WAITING TO RECEIVE MEALS ON WHEELS AT HOME ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

- REPORT FAIR OR POOR SELF-RATED HEALTH
- REPORT NOT HAVING ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY FOOD THEY NEED
- REPORT RECENT FALLS OR FEAR OF FALLING THAT LIMITS ABILITY TO STAY ACTIVE
- BE BLACK OR HISPANIC
- SCREEN POSITIVE FOR DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY
- REQUIRE ASSISTANCE WITH SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES OR PREPARING FOOD
- TAKE THREE OR MORE MEDICATIONS EACH DAY
- BE ENROLLED IN BOTH MEDICAID AND MEDICARE

WE NEED INCREASED FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR OUR SENIORS NOW TO PREVENT EVEN GREATER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES LATER

Meals on Wheels America is the leadership organization supporting the 5,000+ community-based programs across the country that are dedicated to addressing senior isolation and hunger. This network serves virtually every community in America and, along with more than two million staff and volunteers, delivers the nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety checks that enable America’s seniors to live nourished lives with independence and dignity. By providing funding, leadership, education, research and advocacy support, Meals on Wheels America empowers its local member programs to strengthen their communities, one senior at a time.

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