



March 18, 2016

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education & the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education & the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott:

I write today on behalf of Meals on Wheels America and the more than 5,000 local, community-based senior nutrition programs across the country to commend you for your leadership and bipartisan efforts to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA). Meals on Wheels America appreciates your work to build off of the legislation that unanimously passed the Senate last July, S. 192, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015, and we urge the House to adopt the amendment package you have put forward without delay.

For more than 50 years, the OAA has supported the nutrition services and infrastructure that enable our nation's seniors to grow older in their communities and live with the independence and dignity they deserve. In fact, on March 22 we will celebrate the anniversary of President Nixon signing into law the amendment to the OAA that officially established a nutrition program for seniors 60 years and older. Today, it is Title III of the OAA that authorizes the Congregate Nutrition Program, Home-Delivered Nutrition Program and Nutrition Services Incentive Program. Collectively, these programs comprise the only federally supported programs targeted specifically to the unique nutritional and social needs of our nation's older adults.

Through the foundational support provided by the OAA and also by leveraging an army of 2 million volunteers and additional state, local and private resources, OAA Nutrition Programs delivered 219 million nutritious meals, safety checks and friendly visits to more than 2.4 million of our nation's most vulnerable seniors in 2013. While impressive, these numbers are unfortunately on the decline while, at the same time, the need for nutritious meals has never been at a more critical level.

Today, 9.6 million seniors – or one in six – may not know from where their next meal will come. A Government Accountability Office report released last summer also found that about 83% of food insecure seniors and 83% of physically impaired seniors did not receive meals [through the OAA], but likely need them. And finally, the network as a whole is serving 21 million fewer meals annually to seniors than we were a decade ago due to declining federal and state grants, stagnant private funding and rising food and transportation costs. These are just a few of the many reasons why it is essential that the OAA reauthorization bill you put forward be passed immediately and ultimately, signed into law.

Meals on Wheels America advocated early in the reauthorization process for additional modifications to the OAA, as did other national organizations. However, we support the approach taken through this legislation to preserve the core OAA services, particularly the nutrition programs. Given that resources remain insufficient to meet the growing need and escalating

demand, we also look forward to working with this Congress through the appropriations process to increase investments so that, at a minimum, we stave off the continued decline in the number of individuals and meals served.

Again, we applaud you for your leadership in moving this process forward and for your dedication to the OAA and the seniors it serves. We urge the House to adopt the bipartisan amendments to S. 192 and remain hopeful that the Senate will follow suit quickly and the President will sign it into law in the weeks ahead. Doing so not only supports the health and wellbeing of our seniors, but our nation as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ellie Hollander". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellie Hollander
President and CEO