

## **The Nourishing Our Golden Years Act**

There is a growing field of research that indicates older Americans are at increased risk of hunger and malnutrition. In 2014 alone, 15.8% or 10.2 million older American's age 60 and up experienced at least some level of food insecurity. Food insecure older adults often resort to coping strategies to stretch a budget, this may mean buying low cost low nutrient foods or forgoing medications. Food insecure seniors experience more doctors' visits, emergency room visits, and hospitalizations than their non-food insecure counterparts. In addition, food insecure seniors are 60% more likely to experience depression, 53% more likely to report a heart attack, 52% more likely to develop asthma, and 40% more likely to report an experience of congestive heart failure, which all increase health care spending.

In order to help address food insecurity, Congress authorized the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). CSFP serves nearly 700,000 low-income adults age 60 and up each year with monthly shelf-stable, nutrient rich foods. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) uses its buying power to purchase specific nutrient-rich foods at wholesale prices for distribution to eligible seniors. The average cost of a CSFP food package is approximately \$20, while the retail value of each package is closer to \$50.

While CSFP application requirements vary by state, current [federal regulation](#) requires recertification of eligible seniors every 6 or 12 months depending on the state. This requirement is burdensome for states, administering agencies, as well as seniors. Sometimes it results in the unintentional removal of seniors from the program. Older Americans who qualify for CSFP are generally on a fixed income with little to no change in their income on a yearly basis. Advocates report that the burden of recertification is a barrier to receiving nutrition assistance and that it is common for eligible older adults to be removed from the program because they are unable to recertify eligibility in time. Some states that administer CSFP are interested extending the certification period in order to reduce administrative burden and reduce the churn of individuals who qualify for CSFP.

### **What will the Nourishing Our Golden Years Act do?**

- Set a minimum CSFP certification period of one year; and
- Provide states the flexibility to extend the CSPF certification period beyond the set minimum, so long as the participants address, interest in the program, and income is evaluated annually.

### **To date, the following organizations are supportive of the bill:**

- The National Commodity Supplemental Food Program Association
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- Alliance to End Hunger
- Bread for the World
- Defeat Malnutrition Today
- Feeding America
- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
- Hunger Free America
- MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
- Meals on Wheels America
- National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
- National Council on Aging (NCOA)