

September 9, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Minority Leader Schumer:

The 55 undersigned national organizations write today regarding the urgent need to increase funding for senior nutrition programs to address the rapidly escalating national crises of hunger and isolation that impact millions of older Americans. **We urge you to prioritize at least \$1.3 billion in FY26 funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program to begin to address mounting wait lists for Meals on Wheels and Congregate meal services.**

For more than fifty years, the Older Americans Act Nutrition Program has supported the health and well-being of older adults, reducing hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition, social isolation, loneliness, and healthcare utilization and costs, enabling them to live in their own homes with dignity and independence. The national network of more than 5,000 local home-delivered and congregate programs provides critical services in all states and Congressional districts. These programs served 240 million meals to 2.5 million older adults in 2024, with a 4:1 return on federal investment. In addition, this modest support for senior nutrition programs realizes significant taxpayer savings by preventing more costly utilization of healthcare and long-term care services.

Unfortunately, the failure of federal funding to keep pace with growing need and rising costs has caused an untenable financial strain on the national network of senior nutrition programs, leading to a severe and worsening national emergency. The expiration of pandemic dollars, cuts in Fiscal Year 2024 funding to the OAA Nutrition Program—the first in over a decade— followed by flat funding in FY25, elevated food and gas prices, shortages of volunteers, and a dearth of philanthropic support (only 1% of which goes to seniors/aging causes) have all combined to exacerbate a dire situation.

Demand for these services has only increased in recent years with nearly 12,000 Americans turning 60 each day, the fastest rate in a century. The impact is driving substantial growth in waiting lists. In a recent survey of Meals on Wheels programs, 35% of programs indicated that they currently have a wait list and many others intend to start one, with an average wait of four months and in some cases up to two years. Without a significant increase to current funding for

FY 2026, millions of older adults will be left without the meals and companionship they urgently need.

Given these on-the-ground realities, we urge you to follow the example of congressional action in response to the looming crisis when the WIC program faced the prospect of a waiting list for the first time in a generation. We are already amid an emergency for vulnerable older adults and the programs that serve them. This emergency will only grow more dire without immediate action.

Therefore, on behalf of the 55 organizations representing a diverse range of groups and programs, **we call on you to prioritize at least \$1.3 billion in annual appropriations for the OAA Nutrition Program to help address the worsening crises of hunger and isolation that have put millions of our vulnerable older adults in grave danger.**

We deeply appreciate your consideration of our request. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Meals on Wheels America
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Programs (NANASP)
AARP
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
ADvancing States
Aging and Vision Loss National Coalition
Aging Life Care Association
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alliance to End Hunger
American Association of Service Coordinators
American Foundation for the Blind
American Geriatrics Society
American Society for Nutrition
American Society on Aging
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Avodah
Balanced
Coalition on Human Needs
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congressional Hunger Center
Defeat Malnutrition Today
Elder Justice Coalition
End Hunger Network
Food Research & Action Center
Generations United
Gerontological Society of America
HealthHIV
Hunger Free America
Just Solutions I
JustLeadershipUSA

JustUS Coordinating Council
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Medicare Rights Center
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of RSVP Directors
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Center for Health Research
National Coalition for LGBTQ Health
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Aging
National Women's Law Center
NCBA, Inc.
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
RESULTS
SAGE
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
United Church of Christ
Village to Village Network
VisionServe Alliance
Wholesome Wave

Cc: President Donald Trump
The Honorable Russell Vought, Director, Office of Management and Budget
The Honorable Vince Haley, Director, Domestic Policy Council
The Honorable Robert F Kennedy, Jr, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Mary Lazare, Acting Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging
The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable, Patty Murray Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations