

April 2, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Chair Collins, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Vice Chair Murray:

The 50 undersigned national organizations write today regarding the urgent need to increase funding for senior nutrition programs to address a rapidly escalating national crisis: Millions of older Americans are struggling to meet their needs for nutritious food without assistance that should be available to them. Local senior nutrition programs across the country are expanding waitlists and reducing services due to rising costs and flat federal funding. **We urge you to prioritize full funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program at \$2.285 billion to address mounting waitlists for home delivered and congregate meal services and keep pace with rising food, fuel and labor costs to ensure local programs can meet the growing need among older adults.**

For more than fifty years, the Older Americans Act Nutrition Program has helped older adults remain healthy and independent in their own homes by providing nutritious meals and regular social connection. Through more than 5,000 local home-delivered and congregate programs operating in every congressional district, the network served 244 million meals to 2.6 million older adults in 2025. Each federal dollar leverages two dollars of state, local, and private funding while helping prevent costly healthcare and long-term care utilization.

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, forcing programs to cap enrollment, reduce delivery days, or start waitlists for the first time. Demand continues to increase, with nearly 12,000 Americans turning 60 each day, the fastest rate in a century. Too many older adults struggle today with affordability to meet their basic needs, causing profound personal hardship and societal costs.

Waitlists are already expanding. A recent survey of Meals on Wheels programs found one in three programs currently has a waitlist and many others expect to start one, with an average wait of four months and in some cases up to two years. The Government Accountability Office estimates that 2.5 million low-income, food insecure older adults in need are not currently receiving OAA Nutrition Program services. The expiration of pandemic increases, cuts in Fiscal Year 2024 funding to the OAA Nutrition Program, the first in over a decade, followed by flat funding in FY25 and FY26, five years of elevated food and gas prices, shortages of volunteers, and a dearth of philanthropic support (less than 1% of which

goes to seniors) have all contributed to widespread and growing unmet need. The \$2.285 billion funding we request is the amount necessary to provide the nutritious meals, connection and care to all older Americans in need.

When Congress faced the prospect of WIC program waitlists, it acted quickly to prevent eligible families from losing access to nutrition assistance. A similar situation now exists for older adults relying on OAA nutrition programs who **deserve the same commitment**. Without a meaningful increase in FY 2027 funding, local programs will be forced to continue expanding waitlists and reducing services at the very moment the older adult population is rapidly growing, leaving millions of older adults without the meals and companionship they urgently need.

On behalf of the 50 national organizations representing a diverse range of groups and interests, **we call on you to prioritize \$2.285 billion in annual appropriations for the OAA Nutrition Program to help address the worsening crises of hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition, social isolation and loneliness, 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

Aging Life Care Association

Alliance for Aging Research

Alliance to End Hunger

American Geriatrics Society

American Society for Nutrition

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

Autistic People of Color Fund

Bread for the World

Coalition on Human Needs

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Region

Congressional Hunger Center

Dance/USA

Defeat Malnutrition Today

Elder Justice Coalition

Food Research & Action Center

Foundation for Social Connection

Futures Without Violence

Generations United

Gerontological Society of America

Human Appeal USA
Hunger Free America
Institute for Policy Studies' Poverty Project
LeadingAge
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of RSVP Directors
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Aging
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center Action Fund
NCBA, Inc.
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
SAGE
The Salvation Army National Headquarters
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ
Village to Village Network
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, Principal Deputy Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging,
Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Honorable John Thune, Majority Leader, United States Senate

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader, United States Senate

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

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