



September 23, 2013

Dear Senator:

We are writing to urge you to end sequestration for the nutrition programs authorized under the Older Americans Act (OAA) for Fiscal Year 2014, and the eight years to follow. The pain of sequestration is real, and our nation's most vulnerable and hungry seniors are suffering the consequences every day it continues.

The nutritious meals provided through our programs, along with the social and wellness check from a volunteer or staff member, enables millions of seniors to remain more healthy and independent in their own homes, as opposed to far more costly alternatives such as nursing homes or hospitals. In light of sequestration, however, the health and well-being of those with the greatest social and economic need have been compromised. For FY13, OAA nutrition programs have faced a \$51M funding reduction compressed in less than six months. As such, programs have had to reduce the number of meals served, put seniors on waitlists—many for the first time ever—cut staff and/or close their doors altogether.

Our programs serve more than 2.5 million seniors annually, with the incredible help of approximately 2 million volunteers, and a dedicated staff of more than 100,000. While this is an accomplishment for which we are proud, the gap continues to widen between the number of seniors served and an ever-growing need. While the financial resources fall substantially short due to sequestration; continued declines in federal, state and local funding; increased transportation and food costs; and diminished donations yet to return to pre-recession levels, our programs have the network and infrastructure to fill the need-gap.

The business, economic and social cases exist for *investing in* home-delivered and congregate programs. In fact, a recent report found that sequestering \$10M in Meals on Wheels funding in FY13 could cost taxpayers \$489 million in additional Medicaid spending alone. If sequestration is not reversed, Medicaid-related costs would invariably increase every year sequestration remains in place. This is the exact opposite result sequestration was intended to produce.

As such, we call on you to support a complete end to sequestration for the nutrition programs authorized under the Older Americans Act. Exempt them from cuts, as has been done for other federal nutrition programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Our programs are serving an equally vulnerable and distinct group of older adults who are often more frail, isolated and in the greatest economic or social need.

Sincerely,

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