

December 23, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Mikulski and Harkin and Ranking Members Shelby and Moran:

In light of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 and appropriations decisions that remain for this fiscal year, we request that you work to restore the devastating cuts sequestration has caused Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Programs, like Meals on Wheels, and fund them at their FY10 level of \$819 million. We make this joint ask knowing that providing proper nutrition to vulnerable seniors promotes better health outcomes, saves significant taxpayer dollars and is the morally right thing to do.

The nutritious meals, friendly visits, socialization and safety checks provided by our members' volunteers and staff enable more than 2.5 million seniors to remain healthier and independent in their own homes and communities. Congregate and home-delivered meal programs, which are supported through OAA funding, prevent taxpayers from having to pay for costlier care options such as nursing homes and hospitals often paid through Medicare and Medicaid. A recent study by the Center for Effective Government showed that for every \$1 invested in Meals on Wheels, there is up to \$50 in savings for the Medicaid program alone.

On top of the social and economic cases for investing in OAA Nutrition Programs, the public overwhelmingly supports them as well. In fact, an October survey found that 7 in 10 Americans agree the government should pay for Meals on Wheels. The exponentially growing problem of senior hunger in America requires the continued public-private partnerships that have been effectively leveraged to date. However, the federal government must serve as our strongest and most reliable fiscal partner by elevating its support to higher levels that keep pace with inflation and a rapidly aging population.

As you develop the final FY14 appropriations bill(s), we urge you to consider investing at FY10 appropriations levels for OAA Nutrition Programs. As you are well aware, sequestration has been devastating; some of our programs have been forced to establish waiting lists for the first time in 40 years. The Budget Agreement provides a unique opportunity not only to shorten waiting lists and increase the number of nutritious meals we can serve to seniors today, but also to invest in a stronger fiscal path for our country by reducing future health care costs.

With millions of seniors facing hunger and poverty and more than 10,000 persons turning 65 every day, now is the time to recognize that OAA Nutrition Programs are not only proven and effective, but they have long been part of the solution.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Alliance to End Hunger
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
Association of Jewish Aging Services
Bread for the World
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Action Partnership
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Feeding America
Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
LeadingAge
Lutheran Services in America
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Meals On Wheels Association of America
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Senior Corps Association
OWL- The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
RESULTS
Senior Service America, Inc.
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Justice Team
The Jewish Federations of North America
Veterans Health Council
Vietnam Veterans of America
WhyHunger

Cc: Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies