



November 12, 2013

Dear Budget Conferees:

We are writing to urge you to negotiate a balanced plan for deficit reduction that ends sequestration and protects Senior Nutrition Programs authorized under the Older Americans Act (OAA) from further funding cuts. Not only are the most vulnerable and hungry seniors in your states suffering the consequences from the FY 2013 sequestration cuts, but so too are taxpayers onto whose shoulders considerable financial burden has now been shifted.

The nutritious meals, friendly visits, 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, avert far more costly health care alternatives often paid for through Medicare and Medicaid. However, sequestration has forced too many programs to turn away hungry and vulnerable seniors, reduce meal availability and delivery, and in extreme cases, close their doors all together—all at a time when the need due to demographic shifts is escalating.

On top of the social imperative, new research proves the economic case for *investing* in home-delivered and congregate nutrition programs. In April, the Center for Effective Government found that sequestering \$10 million in Meals on Wheels funding in FY 2013 could cost taxpayers \$489 million in additional Medicaid spending alone, and does not take into account increased Medicare costs associated with hunger and improper nutrition. If sequestration is not reversed, at a minimum, Medicaid-related costs will increase considerably every year sequestration remains in place.

Investing in nutrition for older Americans today reduces the burden of debt on all Americans tomorrow. This isn't just a win-win; this is a no-brainer. In fact, in a survey just conducted, more than 7 in 10 individuals believe that the government should pay for Meals on Wheels.

Therefore, we call on Congress to do what has been done for many other federal nutrition programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture: specifically, exempt OAA Nutrition Programs from sequestration and replace the sequester with a plan that recognizes the significant return on investment these programs offer taxpayers. Senior Nutrition Programs serve an equally vulnerable group of people—older adults who are often frail, isolated and in the greatest economic or social need. With millions of seniors facing hunger and poverty and more than 10,000 seniors turning 65 every day, now is the time to invest in our proven and effective programs. They are a part of the solution to our nation's fiscal challenges.

Sincerely,

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