

# Older Adult Nutrition Programs Reach Golden Milestone but Further Investment Needed to Support this Vulnerable Population

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# Thank You and Introduction

- Thank you
- Honor to be back for a Women In Government conference
- Appreciate the interest that several WIG members have had on topics I will cover today in the area of nutrition and older adults
- I am proud to be the National Coordinator of the Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition now 121 members strong including WIG and we are proud to sponsor our session today

# MILESTONE REACHED!



**SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM**

CELEBRATE • INNOVATE • EDUCATE

- Let's begin with the milestone
- On March 22 the nation celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Older Americans Act nutrition program. It was on this day that President Nixon signed this bipartisan legislation into law
- May not be immediately familiar to you—but when I say Meals on Wheels I know that is immediately recognizable
- OAA nutrition program funds both home-delivered meals and meals served in a congregate setting (senior centers, etc.)

# Benefits of the OAA Nutrition Program

- Program grew out of a small demonstration into a permanent program which has improved the lives and health of millions of older adults in its history
- Program has 3 purposes:
  - To reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition
  - To promote socialization of older individuals
  - To promote the health and well-being of older individuals
- Malnutrition the most recent addition in 2020
- Program has fulfilled all of its purposes
- It has also saved countless millions of dollars for the Medicare and Medicaid program

# OAA Nutrition and the Pandemic

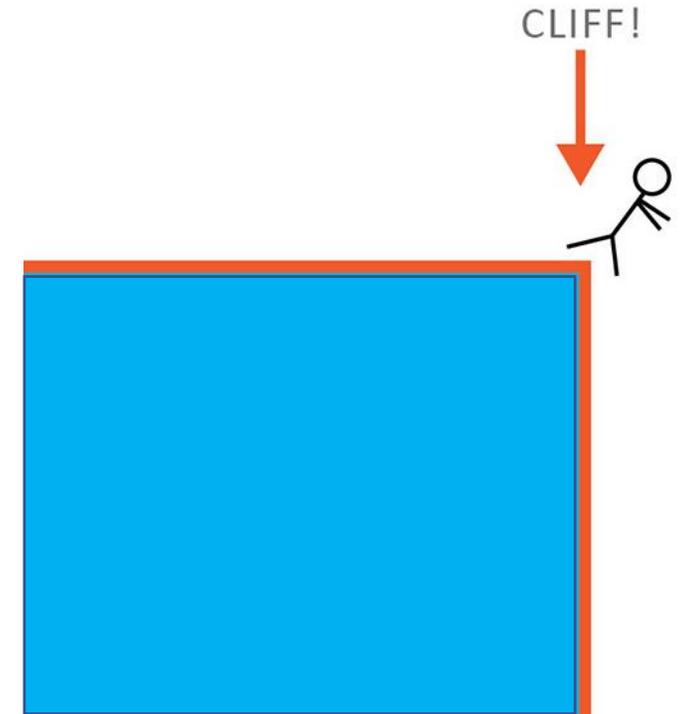
- The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary held in the most challenging time for this program
- The pandemic caused this program's biggest change in its history
- Before the pandemic, over 2/3 of meals were served in congregate settings
- One month after the pandemic began, the vast majority of meals were home-delivered or “grab and go” at senior centers
- Yet the program never missed a beat—and got vital meals to older adults
- As a result of both its strong history and its response to the pandemic, Congress responded the best way it could

# What Happened?

- Congress provided \$1.6 billion in emergency funding for the OAA nutrition programs over the 4 covid 19 bills they passed
- That was double its funding level before the pandemic
- But as the title of this presentation suggests—  
“further investment needed”
- That is where we are today

# Funding Fiscal Year 2023: Avoiding a Service Cliff

- Work under way on getting funding bills passed for the new fiscal year (starts October 1)
- Central to our advocacy strategy is to avoid a service cliff
- Meaning: Programs and services maintained or expanded to meet growing demand having to cut back due to lower funding amounts



# FY 2023 Is Imminent

- The pandemic emergency funds were used quickly and wisely, and they are still needed for two distinct reasons
- Demand grew—many more people served in part due to expanding who was eligible for homebound meals
- Inflation—it has so intensified in this past year
  - Two of the most impacted categories, food and gas, are most vital to the success of these programs
  - Food is up 8.8% over May 2021 and gas is up to \$4.99/gallon national average
- Therefore, leading national nutrition advocacy groups including the DMT coalition seek a **doubling of funding** for the OAA nutrition program for FY 2023

# The Ask – FY 2023

Program	FY21 Final	FY22 Final	FY23 President
Title III-C Nutrition Total	\$951.7 million	\$966.7 million	\$1.273 billion
<i>III-C-1 Congregate Meals</i>	<i>\$515 million</i>	<i>\$515 million</i>	<i>\$762 million</i>
<i>III-C-2 Home-Delivered Meals</i>	<i>\$276 million</i>	<i>\$291 million</i>	<i>\$410 million</i>
<i>III-C Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)</i>	<i>\$160 million</i>	<i>\$160 million</i>	<i>\$100 million</i>

President's Proposal: \$1.273 billion

Our Ask: doubling of funding over FY 2022 to a total of **\$1.933 billion**

# Critical Time for FY 2023 Funding

- Critical time right now as work on FY 2023 funding bills underway in both House and Senate
- I testified before the House Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee
- Advocated for doubling of funding for nutrition programs and funding for senior centers



House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Hearing on

**HEALTHY AGING: MAXIMIZING  
THE INDEPENDENCE,  
WELL-BEING, AND HEALTH OF  
OLDER ADULTS**

# What You Can Do

- If anyone in your federal Congressional delegation is on the Appropriations Committee, please contact them and urge them to support **\$1.933 billion** for the Older Americans Act nutrition program for FY 23
- But even before you do that: locate the OAA nutrition program that is closest to you at home. Pay a visit. Ask the staff how important getting this funding is for them doing their job
- Then if you have a chance to see an actual participant—ask them about the value of the program
- And if you are able to do all this—add it to your message

# More on Investment for FY 2023

- Need to keep increased SNAP benefits past the end of the public health emergency
- Increases for Commodity Supplemental Food Program also needed
- And the Social Services Block Grant, which also helps states fund nutrition programs

# Quality Measure: Another Investment

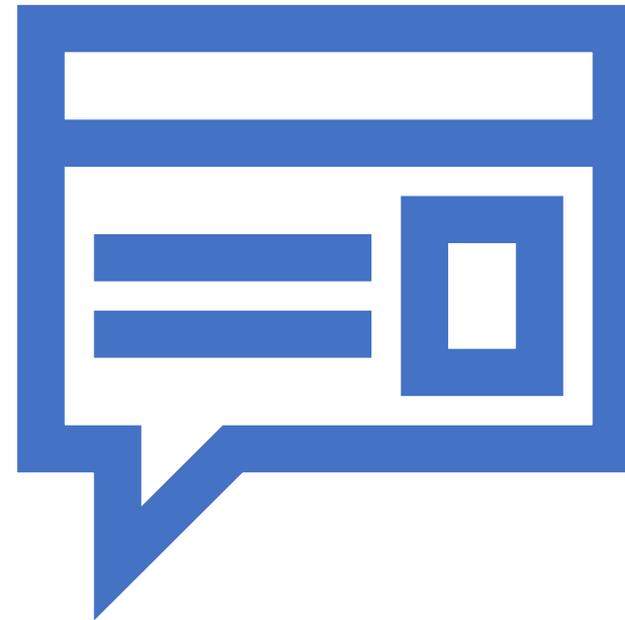
- A major highlight for our DMT this year was the inclusion of a composite malnutrition quality measure in the proposed inpatient hospital rule issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- This inclusion so far is the culmination of many years of work by a number of nutrition, health and aging groups
- The quality measure consists of:
  - Screening all patients for malnutrition on admission to hospital
  - Assessment of those found to be at risk
  - Diagnosis and a discharge nutrition care plan for those who are malnourished

# Why a Quality Measure?

- Malnutrition is present in 30% to 50% of hospitalized patients aged 60 or older but only 11% of patients have a malnutrition diagnosis documented
- Malnutrition lengthens hospital stays
- Results in higher readmission rates
- Contributes to the estimated \$53 billion in malnutrition-associated annual healthcare costs
- In our mind the key element of this quality measure—is the nutrition care plan that is developed for discharge
- It is a great opportunity for hospitals to connect with community-based nutrition entities to direct the discharged patient to the nutrition they need

# What Can You Do?

- The public comment period ended on June 17 but advocacy is still needed to achieve the last step: inclusion of the quality measure in the final hospital inpatient rule which will be released in August
- Communicate your support directly to CMS
- Or author a resolution if you are in session in support of the quality measure



# White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022

- President Biden in May formally called a White House Conference on Hunger, Health and Nutrition to be held in September
- First one of its kind since 1969
- Its purpose, if not goal is to “develop a roadmap to end hunger and improve nutrition by 2030”
  - By reviewing existing government programs and strategies
  - Considering new approaches to improve health by eliminating hunger, reducing chronic disease, and improving access to and consumption of nutritious foods

# White House Conference

- Progress is being made on the conference
- To date, listening sessions in all regions of the country have been held
- The White House has identified 5 pillars they want the conference to focus on



# The Pillars

1

Improve food  
access and  
affordability

2

Integrate nutrition  
and health

3

Empower all  
consumers to make  
and have access to  
healthy choices

4

Support physical  
activity for all

5

Enhance nutrition  
and food security  
research

# White House Conference— What We Don't Know

- The actual date in September
- Who will be invited to attend the main event and how they will be chosen
- What the conference will produce as its deliverable(s)
- And of particular interest to us—where will the unique nutritional needs and concerns of older adults fit into this conference. It is a singular focus of advocacy right now

# What Can You Do?

- Have WIG conduct its own listening session/event working in coordination with the White House and send them your main recommendations
- Convey your interest in participating directly to either your House member or one of your Senators and ask them to convey this directly to the White House.
- If you are here from either NJ or Mass—Sen. Booker and Rep. McGovern were key sponsors of the legislation—by all means let them know your interest.
- Stay in touch with us for updates

# Closing

- Progress in Washington is episodic and can be short lived without sustained advocacy
- Especially true with nutrition and older adults
- Nutrition is the intervention that might prevent an older adult from becoming vulnerable
- Nutrition is about more than just a meal. It is about a pathway to better health: when it is provided in a congregate setting it is about the value of socialization and averting social isolation
- Nutrition is about prevention as 2/3 of COVID-related hospitalizations were related to diabetes, obesity, and heart disease and poor nutrition is connected to those conditions

# Closing

- The goal should be nutrition security in our nation
- Having consistent access, availability and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well being and prevent disease
- It is about not subsidizing poor nutrition—we need a pricing shift that allows good nutritious food to be as affordable as food promoting poor nutrition
- And while our focus is on further investment for older adult nutrition, an additional policy goal should be promoting good nutrition throughout the lifespan.
- Thank you