

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Chairman, Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chairman, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman, Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman, Energy & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chairman, Education & Workforce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Republican Colleagues:

We are writing today to express our serious concerns regarding efforts by the Trump Administration and the potential of cuts proposed in your budget resolution to debilitate our nation’s beloved nutrition programs for seniors, taking hot meals, sustenance, and social interaction away from our seniors to fund tax cuts for billionaires. These attacks are multifaceted and will deeply hurt all aspects of senior nutrition services, from funding to program delivery. The cuts will exacerbate hunger, poor health, and social isolation, and our nation’s seniors will be gravely harmed by these decisions.

In 2022, nearly 7 million older Americans experienced food insecurity, with numbers projected to reach up to 9 million by 2050.¹ Hunger is particularly salient for older adults living in rural areas and in the South.² Food insecure seniors are 74 percent more likely to be diabetic, nearly 3 times more

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Food%20Insecurity%20Among%20Seniors%20and%20Older%20Adults%20in%202022.pdf>

² <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/rural-hunger-facts>; <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Food%20Insecurity%20Among%20Seniors%20and%20Older%20Adults%20in%202022.pdf>

likely to suffer from depression, 71 percent more likely to have congestive heart failure, and 64 percent more likely to have a heart attack.³ Without access to nutritious food, seniors are more likely to live in poor health—this is not the life we want or envision for our older Americans.

Senior nutrition programs, such as Meals on Wheels, include meal delivery services and congregate nutrition programs (e.g., those provided at senior centers). For home-bound seniors, meal delivery services are a lifeline; for some, the meals delivered will be the only meal they have to eat all day. Beyond nutrition, meal delivery services provide life-sustaining social interaction and safety checks for older adults; many seniors report going for weeks without seeing another person if not for their home-delivered meals volunteers. Similarly, congregate meals provide the nutrition and social connection needed for seniors to live and thrive in their communities. Senior nutrition programs save taxpayer dollars by reducing more costly health care expenditures such as avoidable trips to the emergency room, and hospital admissions and readmissions.⁴ Furthermore, senior nutrition programs can delay or eliminate the need for placement in a long-term care facility.⁵ These programs use taxpayer dollars efficiently; the cost of just one day in a hospital or ten days in a nursing home is nearly equivalent to a full year of Meals on Wheels.⁶ Cutting senior nutrition programs will increase unnecessary health care expenditures among older adults.

In addition, funding from the Social Services Block Grant, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) enable seniors to put food on the table and access nutrition support. Enacting policies and funding cuts that force seniors to go hungry is cruel. We ask that you to stand with older Americans and reconsider any efforts to scale back support and back off attacks on the SSA and Administration of Community Living (ACL) programs.

We are specifically concerned about the impact of the following actions and proposed cuts:

The dismantling of the Administration for Community Living threatens the delivery of senior nutrition programs. The Older Americans Act (OAA) is a fundamental source of support for senior nutrition. In 2019, over 223 million meals were provided to older adults through OAA’s Nutrition Programs.⁷ ACL is responsible for the delivery of most OAA programs. The Department of Health and Human Services recently proposed a “reorganization” of ACL.⁸ However, there has been no clarity or transparency in the proposed reorganization. Transferring ACL programs to the Administration for Children and Families, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services—also reeling from devastating staffing reductions—disrupts implementation of the home-delivered and congregate meals programs. Disruption in program administration and delivery means that the 2.4 million seniors who rely on these meal

³ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/2021%20-%20Health%20Consequences%20of%20Senior%20Hunger%201999-2016.pdf>

⁴ https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/the-case-for-meals-on-wheels/report_the-case-for-meals-on-wheels_9-19-23.pdf

⁵ https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/the-case-for-meals-on-wheels/report_the-case-for-meals-on-wheels_9-19-23.pdf

⁶ <https://www.elderguru.com/how-much-do-meals-on-wheels-cost/>; <https://www.medicaidplanningassistance.org/nursing-home-costs/>; <https://www.statista.com/statistics/630443/inpatient-day-hospital-costs-in-us-by-nonprofit-or-profit/>

⁷ https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/fact-sheets/2021/2021-national/oaafactsheet_february2022_mowa.pdf

⁸ [https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-restructuring-doge.html#:~:text=Reorganization%20of%20the%20Administration%20for,and%20Medicaid%20Services%20\(CMS\)](https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-restructuring-doge.html#:~:text=Reorganization%20of%20the%20Administration%20for,and%20Medicaid%20Services%20(CMS))

programs for critical nutrition are at risk of going hungry and of further health complications. We ask that you work with us to ensure the integrity and wholeness of any and all OAA programs that are being transferred out of ACL.

Eliminating the Social Services Block Grant and cutting Medicaid take food away from seniors.

In addition to OAA funding, the Social Services Block Grant also provides critical support for senior nutrition programs. For example, cuts to the Social Services Block Grant will force the Meals on Wheels program in Abilene, Texas to cut more than half of its services, taking away hot meals and sustenance away from hundreds of Texans who are older adults or people with disabilities.⁹ Medicaid can also fill the gap of unmet food needs and reduce the likelihood of nutrition-related health conditions through meal-delivery programs provided through Section 1115 waivers for home-bound older adults and people with disabilities.¹⁰ We ask that you reconsider any potential attacks to the Social Services Block Grant, Medicaid funding and changes to waiver programs that address health-related social issues,¹¹ and other vital sources of social services funding that help seniors live full and healthy lives.

Attacks on Social Security threaten seniors' food security. The so-called “Department of Government Efficiency” or DOGE’s attack on the SSA has debilitated its ability to provide quality customer service and threatens timely and accurate benefit payments for seniors and people with disabilities.¹² Forty percent of older Americans rely on Social Security as their only source of retirement income—money to make sure they have food on the table.¹³ Without their Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, over half of disabled adult beneficiaries would live below the federal poverty line.¹⁴ Through office closures and slashing of staff, SSA will not be able to provide critical customer services to Social Security beneficiaries. If DOGE continues to toy around with the integrity of the SSA’s payment system, a total collapse may result—seniors will not receive their Social Security checks, and they will go hungry. We ask that you rein in DOGE’s attacks on the SSA and work with us to strengthen the Social Security programs so all Americans can access their earned benefits.

Cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The SNAP Program is the centerpiece of our public anti-hunger infrastructure and is, by far, the biggest food assistance program promoting the food security of Americans.¹⁵ Food insecure seniors consume less energy and have lower intake of key nutrients,¹⁶ and SNAP participation is linked to fewer nursing home and hospital admissions for seniors.¹⁷ SNAP cuts of \$230 billion or more,¹⁸ as contemplated by the budget resolution, would fall heavily on senior citizens,¹⁹ who would almost certainly be subject to benefit or eligibility cuts, forcing elderly individuals to make painful choices between purchasing food, medicine, or other daily necessities. We urge you to reconsider any potential cuts to SNAP.

⁹ <https://westtexastribune.org/2025/04/06/meals-on-wheels-faces-potential-federal-funding-cuts/>

¹⁰ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10986195/>

¹¹ <https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib03042025.pdf>

¹² <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/03/01/doge-actions-may-cause-social-security-benefit-interruption-ex-agency-head.html>

¹³ <https://www.nirsonline.org/reports/examining-the-nest-egg/>

¹⁴ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/social-security-disability-insurance-0>

¹⁵ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/key-statistics-and-research>

¹⁶ <https://www.ncoa.org/article/what-is-food-insecurity-get-the-facts/>

¹⁷ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8893035/>

¹⁸ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/millions-of-low-income-households-would-lose-food-aid-under-proposed-house>

¹⁹ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/house-farm-bills-snap-cuts-work-requirements-would-hurt-older-americans>

Republican colleagues, we ask for your commitment to preserving and supporting these programs to ensure that our nation's seniors have the nutrition and sustenance they need to live healthy, nourished lives in the community.

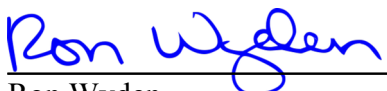
Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Special
Committee on Aging



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



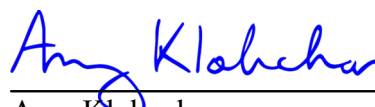
Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Finance



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Budget



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry