

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-128, The Capitol,  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee Room  
Room S-128, The Capitol,  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services  
United States Senate  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services  
United States Senate  
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy, Chair Murray, Vice Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Blunt:

As Congress considers the fiscal year 2023 (FY23) appropriations bill, I urge you to include nutrition programs for older adults. Specifically, I request that the final FY23 appropriations bill includes \$1.93 billion in funding amount in funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program, which support the delivery of nutritious meals to older adults throughout the country.

Older adults across the country faced hunger and isolation before COVID-19, and nutrition programs have doubled down their efforts to meet growing demand even as COVID-19 continues to disproportionately impact older adults and as higher food prices affect its channels of support and funds. Moreover, there are more than 75 million Americans aged 60 years and older, and the U.S. Census Bureau projects that this number will continue to rise for the next few decades, further emphasizing the need for strong investment in OAA and nutrition programs.

In 2020, an estimated 5.2 million (nearly 7 percent) older adults experienced food insecurity and in 2019 more than 18 million (24 percent) lived alone, putting them at greater risk of being socially isolated and/or lonely. Social isolation has the same adverse impact on health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Congregate and home-delivered meals provided through the OAA Nutrition Program provide a pathway for social connection for older adult participants.

In addition, COVID-19 has also magnified existing disparities for low-income older adults, which underscores the need for funding and programming to be appropriately targeted to those with the greatest need. Black older adults and Hispanic older adults are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than older White adults. Ensuring nutrition and supportive services reach communities that have been historically marginalized, including those with disproportionately high infection and death rates, is extremely important as I work to address COVID-19 related racial and economic disparities.

The OAA is a major federal vehicle for delivery of social and nutrition services for more than 11 million older Americans. These programs include congregate nutrition services, home-delivered nutrition services, transportation services, activities to promote socialization and wellness, employment and community service programs, and family caregiver support.

I urge you to build on Congress' past support for senior meal delivery by including the highest possible funding for OAA programs and OAA Title III-C Nutrition Services, in the final FY23 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator