

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 25, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

As Congress considers additional relief in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to make nutrition programs for older adults a priority. Specifically, we request that the next COVID-19 relief package include \$1.1 billion in funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) programs, including \$750 million for OAA Nutrition Services to support the delivery of nutritious meals to older adults throughout the country.

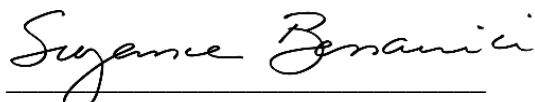
The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act were important steps in responding to the increased demand for OAA programs. We appreciate your leadership in providing those resources, but additional funding is needed to continue providing vital services to seniors across the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately harming older adults. With the closure of congregate meal sites and the steep increase in newly homebound older adults, there is now a higher demand for OAA programs, such as home-delivered meals and other community-based supportive services. According to the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), 93 percent of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) have reported serving more clients since the pandemic began, and 69 percent of AAAs saw an increase in demand for their supportive services. In addition, Meals on Wheels America members are serving an average of 77 percent more meals to 47 percent more seniors since March, with virtually all programs experiencing an increase in the cost of providing services. According to n4a, AAAs reported a 52 percent increase in demand for their caregiver support programs, a 32 percent increase in demand for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, and an 84 percent increase in demand for telephone wellness checks, which may be the only form of contact for socially isolated, homebound older adults.

Even prior to the pandemic, an estimated 5.3 million older adults experienced food insecurity and more than 17.4 million lived alone, putting them at greater risk of being socially isolated. COVID-19 has also magnified existing disparities for low-income older adults, underscoring the need for funding and programming to appropriately target those with the greatest need. As we work to address COVID-19 related racial and ethnic disparities, it is critical to guarantee that nutrition and supportive services reach communities of color, including those with disproportionately high infection and death rates.

We urge you build on past Congressional support for senior meal delivery and other critical aging services by including \$1.1 billion in funding for OAA programs, including \$750 million for OAA Nutrition Services, in the next COVID-19 relief bill. The senior nutrition programs and other targeted efforts to address social isolation and older adult safety are extremely important for our communities at this challenging time. We also urge you to include funding in the relief bill for sufficient supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing materials for the social services staff, health care workers, and caregivers who provide these services and for the senior adults who receive them. Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to the health and well-being of our older Americans as we work to advance a continued legislative response to COVID-19.

Sincerely,




Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Brian Fitzpatrick
Adam Smith
Jamie Raskin
Marcia L. Fudge
Bennie G. Thompson
Danny K. Davis
Nydia M. Velázquez
Peter A. DeFazio
David B. McKinley P.E.
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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