



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Testimony in Support of the Maryland Department of Aging Budget

Senate Budget & Taxation
Health and Human Services Sub-Committee
February 5, 2015

Maryland Hunger Solutions Urges Support for the Congregate Housing Services Program and Senior Nutrition-Education, Congregate Meals, and Home Delivered Meals Program

Senior citizens are one of our most vulnerable populations and they should be protected from the plight of food insecurity. However, senior hunger is a serious and growing problem. Nearly one in five low-income seniors in our state struggles with hunger. Nationally, Maryland has the 8th highest food insecurity rate among low-income seniors. To combat this growing challenge and bring attention to this issue, Maryland Hunger Solutions has designated February as Senior Hunger Action Month.

Enough food, and health-sustaining food, is important to everyone, but it is especially important when people are particularly vulnerable to disease, or when their life circumstances – such as the limited mobility many seniors face – make obtaining a healthy diet more difficult.

Seniors who are food insecure are five times more likely to suffer from depression and nearly 30 percent less likely than their food secure counterparts to maintain good health. Further, food insecurity among seniors increases disabilities, decreases resistance to infection and extends hospital stays. Hunger further complicates health issues for seniors because many medications need to be taken with food to assure their effectiveness. Too many seniors skip meals in order to purchase medication, only to see the “Take with food” label on the prescription bottle.

Programs such as the **Congregate Housing Services Program and the Senior Nutrition-Education, Congregate Meals, and Home Delivered Meals Program** enable seniors to eat nutritious meals on a regular basis, and allow them to preserve their dignity, health, and quality of life during their twilight years. Additionally, by giving seniors the nutrition they need on the front end, these programs also save the state and local communities dollars on the back end by reducing burdensome medical costs and ease stress on families trying to care for their aging loved ones.

These programs have already faced cuts at the federal level due to sequestration, and we cannot afford to further strip them at the state level. Maryland Hunger Solutions urges the full support of **the Congregate Housing Services Program and the Senior Nutrition-Education, Congregate Meals, and Home Delivered Meals Programs** with no cuts to their currently allocated state funding levels. They provide a much more rational and efficient humane way to provide assistance to one of our vulnerable and cherished demographics—our seniors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Wilson".

Michael J. Wilson, Director
Maryland Hunger Solutions

Maryland Hunger Solutions is a state-wide organization working to end hunger, promote nutrition, and improve well-being for Marylanders in need through education, advocacy, outreach and collaboration. Maryland Hunger Solutions focuses on improving and increasing participation in federal nutrition programs to ensure that everyone has access to adequate healthy food every day.