



National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
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**Written Statement of
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And
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**National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
Washington, DC**

**March 29, 2006, 2:00 p.m.
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies**

Summary: Testimony will focus on FY 2007 appropriations for the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging and will specifically address the following programs: Title III and Title V of the Older Americans Act, the Community Services Block Grant, the Social Services Block Grant and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

Chairman Regula and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Elaine Brovont, Executive Director of Mid-Land Meals, Inc. in Lafayette, Indiana. I also serve as President of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP). NANASP is a professional membership organization representing the interests of those in the aging network that provide nutritional and supportive services to seniors in communities across the country. Thank you for this opportunity to present our thoughts on Fiscal Year 2007 appropriations.

NANASP requests that the subcommittee recommend a ten percent increase in funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) nutrition programs for Fiscal Year 2007. This includes congregate meals (Title IIIC1), home-delivered meals (Title IIIC2), and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program. NANASP is a member of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), which is also advocating a ten percent increase in all OAA programs. We are supportive of LCAO's position, but would like to focus specifically on the nutrition programs today.

The nutrition programs make up the largest service program in the Older Americans Act. They operate in every state and congressional district and have a proven performance record over their more than 30 year history. Findings from an Administration on Aging (AoA) survey of program participants shows that the average age of participants in the combined programs is approaching 80. In fact, 69% of those receiving home-delivered meals and 64% of those receiving congregate meals are age 75 and over. The age eligibility for these services is 60, which suggests that once a senior finds this service in his or her community, they use it for many years.

The provision of meals, whether served in the home or congregate setting, maintains the independence of seniors, many of whom have very limited incomes and/or are at risk of being institutionalized. According to the *Pilot Study: First National Survey of Older Americans Act Title III Service Recipients* conducted by AoA, home delivered meals and congregate nutrition programs are effectively targeted to vulnerable populations with 84% of home delivered and 65% of congregate participants reporting annual family incomes under \$15,000. The cost of these nutrition services to the federal government is far lower than the cost of a hospital or nursing home stay would be. But after years of level funding and, most recently in FY 2006, funding cuts, programs are less able to meet the demand for services of the aging population. Unfortunately, the President's FY 2007 budget proposes a \$3.56 million reduction in funding for the three nutrition programs.

Simply put, the OAA nutrition programs need more funding, not less. Local providers are facing two immediate factors that have increased their day-to-day costs: one is the rising cost of food and the second is increasing fuel prices which have a large impact on volunteers and paid drivers delivering meals as well as on programs transporting seniors to the congregate sites. In my program, we have seen a 12% increase in costs overall. That is in a year where, due to budget constraints, we were unable to give any raises to employees who already make only \$6.25 per hour.

Another important OAA program, the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP), was targeted for major reductions and structural changes in the president's budget. The proposal to reduce funding for SCSEP by \$44 million would impact not only those seniors that participate in this important program, but the community-based programs that benefit from their work. In my program, I have 18 employees through SCSEP. They provide the equivalent of \$96,408 worth of services per year. That is 10% of my budget. Without them, our program would serve 20,000 less meals per year. It is critical for both the participants and the programs in which they work that SCSEP remain a fully funded and community-based program.

NANASP is also very concerned with the president's proposal to reduce funding to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) by \$500 million and to eliminate the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Nutrition programs across the country rely on both SSBG and CSBG funds to provide needed services to keep seniors independent and out of institutions. NANASP urges the committee to continue funding these programs at their current levels.

Another program targeted for elimination in the president's budget is the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). CSFP provides monthly nutritious food packages primarily to low-income seniors aged 60 and older to supplement their diets with nutrient-rich foods. Eliminating CSFP is a major cause for concern as almost a half million seniors rely on this program to fill the gaps in their nutritional needs. While this program is outside the jurisdiction of this subcommittee, its elimination would cause a perhaps unintended negative impact on the OAA nutrition programs as those recipients will be forced to look elsewhere to meet their basic nutritional needs. This would put increased demand on the already strained OAA nutrition providers. NANASP strongly opposes this proposal and urges you to vote to restore CSFP's funding during the full committee process.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share NANASP's positions on FY 2007 appropriations. An increase in funding is an investment in a better long-term care system for our nation's seniors and we look forward to working with you to ensure adequate funding for the programs that touch so many seniors across the country each day.