

**Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers**  
**Human Services Committee**  
**Friday, February 8, 2007**

Chairman Harris, Chairman Villano, members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Joel Sekorski and I am testifying on behalf of (CANASP) the Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers.

As the largest program in community based services, elderly nutrition not only provides adequate nutrition but is the foremost defense against premature client institutionalization. Unfortunately, the past few years this program has experienced what some have termed "a death by a thousand cuts." Our federal funding levels have remained stagnant while our costs have skyrocketed.

We have attempted to increase fundraising, worked with our local municipalities in identifying any cost sharing methods, sought additional local funding, and decreased expenditures wherever possible. Previously when funds were insufficient to meet community need, meal programs relied on carry-over funds, sponsor agency support, other cash resources and/or creative initiatives to fill the funding gaps. Today, carry-over funds have been depleted, other resources and initiatives have been maxed and sponsor agencies lack the resources to carry the funding burden. We strive to avoid turning anyone away from this program. The last thing we want to do it is tell someone that we will not feed them. However, as our funding decreases we simply cannot continue to serve at the current rate, and we have exhausted all the "band-aid" options.

We are sure that the benefits of adequate nutrition are evident. Good nutrition results in good health and continued independence. Nutrition is our most basic human need and if left unsatisfied, will result in catastrophic human and fiscal consequences. For many individuals we are the last step before having to increase in-home care, hospitalization or nursing home placement. We work with a frail and vulnerable population, and these programs allow them to stay in their homes and avoid costly alternatives.

Last year the state did increase our funding, and for that we are very grateful. However, the increased funds did not compensate for the stagnant federal funding levels or for the ever increasing costs we face in providing our services.

We are here to support S.B. 382, An Act Concerning An Appropriation To Increase Funding For Elderly Nutrition Programs, and ask for an increase of \$700,000 to our meal programs. As our state population ages the demand for congregate sites and Meals on Wheels has simply increased, however we can not meet current demand.

We are at a fiscal crisis, without this additional funding we simply can not maintain our services. I respectfully urge the Committee to consider allocation additional funding to this program. Thank you for your attention to this matter.