



## CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF NUTRITION AND AGING SERVICE PROVIDERS

### Testimony on Behalf of the CT Association of Nutrition and Aging Services to the Appropriations Committee February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations committee, my name is Joel Sekorski and I am here on behalf of the CT Association of Nutrition and Aging Services (CANASP) to testify in support of the additional funds provided to Elderly Nutrition Programs in the Governor's budget.

As the largest program in community based services, elderly nutrition assistance not only provides adequate nutrition but is the foremost defense against premature client institutionalization. In the past, while the state has provided level funding to Elderly Nutrition Programs, the federal funding has not kept up with the demand for services. At the same time, heat, electricity and food costs have skyrocketed, and the economy as a whole has hit a significant downturn, as you are all well aware. We have also recently seen a considerable drop in the amount of donations we receive to help with additional costs state and federal funds do not fully cover. Thus, while funding has not increased significantly in quite a few years, costs and demand for services have increased immensely. While we do everything we can to minimize costs, such as working with local municipalities to identify cost-sharing measures, and seeking additional funding, we have still struggled to adequately service those in need.

The benefits of proper nutrition are evident to all. We consider our services one of the primary safety nets among our social services system, and we are often the last step before in-home care or nursing home placement. The Meals on Wheels services help to prolong other more expensive services by providing not only adequate nutrition to the elderly, but also a way to ensure safety of those still at home as a result of the daily visit from the food provider.

We are pleased that the Governor has proposed an additional \$900,000 over the biennium to help fund and expand the Elderly Nutrition Programs in the state. With increased demand as a result of the economic downturn, and the increased number of individuals in the state who are aging, the proposed increase in funds is desperately needed. We strongly urge you to maintain the \$900,000 as you put together your final budget. While we are not unaware of the difficult economic state CT finds itself in, we truly feel funding Elderly Nutrition Programs to help keep seniors in their homes and to meet growing need will help keep the states costs down for the long run.

Thank you for you consideration on this matter.