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CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF NUTRITION AND AGING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, members of the Appropriations Committee, we are here to testify on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers (CANASP) in opposition to the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan proposal to reduce certain grant accounts, including Services to the Elderly, by 25%. Elderly Nutrition comprises about half of the Services to the Elderly account.

As the largest program in community based services, Elderly Nutrition not only provides adequate nutrition but is the foremost defense against premature client institutionalization. While the program has received some stimulus money this year, which has helped to recover some of the loss felt in the past few years, the recession has increased the need dramatically. The stimulus money is a short term solution, and not nearly enough to allow us to continue to serve the need if the State portion of our funding were to be reduced by 25%. It is also important to point out that there are narrow guidelines for how stimulus money is to be used, leaving many areas of our organization still hurting for extra dollars. **A 25% reduction to the State's portion of our funding amounts to approximately $800,000, which represents an estimated year's worth of meals for 820 existing clients.**

We are continuously making attempts to increase fundraising, work with our local municipalities to identify any cost sharing methods, seek additional local funding, and decrease 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, as a result of the recession, carry-over funds have been depleted, donations have decreased, other resources and initiatives have been maxed and sponsor agencies lack the resources to carry the funding burden

We are sure that the benefits of adequate nutrition are evident. Good nutrition results in good health and continued independence. For most individuals, Meals on Wheels services are able to prolong more expensive home care, hospitalizations, or nursing home placement. Having meals delivered daily to elderly people living independently has the additional benefit of ensuring there is at least one person checking in to see that everything is generally okay.

Meals on Wheels and congregate meals for the elderly are critical safety net services that help keep long term costs down for our State. A drastic reduction in funding for this service will leave elderly people hungry and at risk of becoming ill, and will only lead to increased costs. Please reject this proposed cut and help us to maintain our ability to service this population.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.