



ESTUARY

COUNCIL OF SENIORS, INC.

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To: Committee on Aging
Re: HB 7072

My name is Stan Mingione, I am the Executive Director of The Estuary Council of Seniors Inc. located in Old Saybrook, CT. The Estuary Council is an Elderly Nutrition provider for the Middlesex county region. We provide both Congregate and Home Delivered Meals.

I am writing this letter in support of all ENP's in the State of CT. Although all our organizations have inherent differences, the one common denominator is the valuable service we provide to our state's elderly population, Home Delivered meals. Our service goes beyond the meal delivery, in many instances the individual delivering a noon time meal may be the only person that meal recipient sees that day or that week. We are also a safety check on the meal recipient, able to alert an emergency contact or first responder to situation that could be life threatening. In many instances, being able to respond to a senior in distress can avert a hospital or emergency room visit with a costly ambulance ride. In some cases, a worse tragedy can be averted. There is no denying the benefit ENPS' provide our states' seniors with both Home Delivered and Congregate meals.

As funding is cut at the Federal and State levels for Senior Services, the demand for our services as ENP'S increases. We all have continued to provide these much needed meals despite lack of funding. Meal unit reimbursement rates have remained flat as food prices and the expense of providing a meal has risen. Some ENPS have closed meal sites, some only deliver 3 days a week to help ease the burden of increased costs, and some have wait lists. None the less, we continue to provide this valuable service for seniors in the state of Connecticut.

Our meal service not only is a benefit to seniors, it also has far reaching effect on a senior's ability to stay independent and in their homes without the fear of food insecurity. This benefit reduces nursing home stays, hospital re-admittances, and reliance on other forms of state aid, saving the state of Connecticut the costs associated with these institutional related forms of care. Caregivers of these individuals also suffer from a loved one in an institutional setting. Absence from work for caregivers also has a negative effect on the economy.

The perception is that the state of Connecticut is a wealthy state and therefore there is not a need for much assistance from federal and state funding in delivering valuable senior services. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

It is my contention that if a senior is “in need” of a home delivered meal their need is real despite the perception of wealth in certain areas of the state. In the Old Saybrook Estuary region where The Estuary Council of Seniors delivers meals, we are often handcuffed as we apply for grants. Because of census data, we cannot show a “need” with individuals being at or below poverty levels. Yet despite individual wealth or means, and through no fault of their own whether it be an illness, death of spouse or caregiver, loss of income, physical restrictions, they find themselves in need of services.

This is why a home delivered meal or congregate meal program is “all of us.” At some point despite our social position in life, we could all be in need of this valuable service. It is a very slippery slope.

It is time to recognize the ENP’S, and the value in the services they provide. It is time to address the funding of this service to ensure that no senior goes hungry. It is time to act on the “ask” of the states’ meal providers and adequately fund senior nutrition.

Sincerely,

Stan Mingione
Executive Director
Estuary Council of Seniors Inc.