



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

January 13, 2020

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senate
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ann Kuster
United States House of Representatives
320 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
United State Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Pappas
United States House of Representatives
323 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of New Hampshire's Congressional Delegation,

Last month, a story appeared in the *Valley News* regarding challenges facing the Meals on Wheels program in Grafton County. In short, the program was facing funding challenges that resulted in a decision to stop serving dessert with meals. My office was deeply concerned and conducted further research into the program's funding.

We were pleased to learn that in December 2019 the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Services account received a \$30 million increase in government funding. This included a \$15 million increase for the Congregate Meal program and a \$15 million increase for the Home Delivered Meals program. As we know, the Older Americans Act provides critical services -- such as home-delivered and congregate meals, family caregiver support, in-home assistance, preventive health services, transportation, job training, protection from abuse, and other supportive services -- which help New Hampshire's older adults live as independently as possible. That being said, funding for the program has failed to keep up with inflation and increased demand from a rapidly aging population.

States are required to provide a non-federal match. The required match is 25 percent for family caregiver support and 15 percent for supportive services, preventive health, and meals. OAA federal funding allows states to leverage additional funds (e.g., state general revenue, block grants, and donations). New Hampshire "overmatches" the non-federal match requirement with public general funds at a rate of 54% for home delivered meals. New Hampshire also transfers funds among congregate and home-delivered meals, doing everything possible to leverage the federal funding stream.

New Hampshire receives OAA funds based on a population formula factor, defined as each state's relative share of the total U.S. population aged 60 and older. Population data is from annual population estimates published by the U.S. Census and not the proportion of individuals who are currently eligible for the program. In addition, there is a two-year lag between the reference year of the population and the respective appropriation year. HHS officials have been in communication with members of your

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staff regarding this issue. We are requesting your assistance in revising the formula by which the federal government supports nutrition services. We appreciate that federal provisions that cap how much any state may lose at any one time makes reform difficult.

In 2017, the State issued a Request for Application (RFA) that asked providers in New Hampshire to request state funds to operate their program. The State fully funded every provider's request. The State requires providers to report on a quarterly basis so that potential funding gaps are identified and appropriate steps are taken to shift funds between nutrition programs, as permissible, to address those gaps.

However, some Meals on Wheels programs, like the one managed by the Grafton County Seniors Citizens Council, Inc., willingly choose to serve individuals more often than the federal criteria allows. This particular program chooses to serve people eligible for meals above the contracted amount, while also choosing to serve individuals that may not meet the technical eligibility standards to receive meals. Grafton blends state, federal, county, and local fundraising dollars in an attempt to shift costs.

We respect and applaud Grafton County and other providers that choose to provide meals to those who might not meet the traditional program eligibility or serve those who do meet requirements but are still in need. They are also making the decision to increase the number of meals per week based on the situation that they are finding on the ground. This is laudable, but it means that they must use their local and state funds to serve those individuals. The Governor's Commission on Aging has agreed to consider the challenge of increased demand for food insecurity and what flexibility the State might consider for nutrition programs moving forward. In short, federal regulations are too prohibitive to the point that counties like Grafton that are meeting a critical need in the community are put at a great financial disadvantage. Reform is desperately needed.

Additionally, it is clear that reconsideration of the federal funding formula and OAA funding is vital to keep pace with the rising number of people aging in our country and in New Hampshire. OAA funding has increased only 1.1 percent annually on average from FY 2001 to FY 2019 (from \$1.68 billion in FY 2001 to \$2.06 billion in FY 2019).

In New Hampshire, with one in every five people being age 60 or older, the delegation should actively work to:

- Revise the formula by which the federal government supports nutrition services and support a hold harmless provision that could increase funding in New Hampshire.
- Advocate for substantive funding authorizations that will ensure federal partnership helps New Hampshire keep pace with its rising population of seniors.
- Actively engage and support the reauthorization of the OAA for an additional seven years (FY2020-FY2026) which is longer than prior OAA reauthorizations, through S.3057, the *Modernization of the Older Americans Act Amendments*, to ensure that New Hampshire is able to strategically plan for and sustain healthy aging supports for older people.

State officials will continue to work with local Meals on Wheels programs to fill funding gaps and ensure that our seniors have as many meals as they need with an enjoyable balance of foods.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Sununu
Governor