



National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs

1612 K Street, NW Suite 400 Washington, DC 20006

(202) 682-6899 (202) 223-2099 fax

www.nanasp.org

***Written Statement of Paul Downey, President, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
Older Americans Act Nutrition Listening Session
Senate HELP Committee
August 25, 2011***

Good afternoon. My name is Paul Downey, President of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs – NANASP. I have been in the Aging Network for almost 17 years as President of Senior Community Centers in San Diego and have an on-the-ground perspective that might be helpful for this session.

NANASP's 600+ members are part of a network that directly impacts more than 2.6 million older Americans each day by providing them with congregate and home delivered meals through the Older Americans Act.

Senior Community Centers does its part by serving more than 1,800 meals daily, seven days per week, 365 days per year, to seniors living on an average of \$850 per month.

The 236 million nutritious meals served annually by OAA meal providers keep seniors like these healthy. Healthy seniors remain independent. They make fewer visits to the emergency room, spend less time in the hospital and don't need costly nursing home care.

This is backed up by data from AoA which reports that more than one in ten seniors served in the congregate program have three or more impairment of activities of daily living (IADLs) -- considered a normal precursor to being admitted to a nursing home. The most commonly reported limitations are the inability to cook meals or shop. The number climbs to over 70 percent for home-delivered meal program participants.

Let me address the two biggest potential issues related to reauthorization: consolidation and transfer authority.

NANASP members have significant concerns about consolidating C1 and C2 meals into a single title. States already have flexibility to ensure nutrition dollars go where they are needed. From FY '07 through FY '09 (the most recent data available), only one state – New Hampshire – found it necessary to transfer the maximum of 40% from C1 to C2. In fact, almost a quarter of the states made no transfers at all and most transferred less than 15%.

Consolidation is a solution in need of a problem.

Vitally important, however, is ensuring that direct service providers have a strong voice in how those funds are distributed at the local level. The needs vary considerably by region -- some areas see growth in congregate, others in home delivered.

I do not see a compelling case for an outright merger of C1 and C2 other than creating the illusion of reducing the size of government. In fact, a total consolidation could have a negative effect on the congregate program which is critical to attracting the older boomer and younger senior into our programs. Congregate programs are more than just a meal. They offer seniors a vital socialization opportunity and help promote wellness.

I have my own example in San Diego. Senior Community Centers' state of the art Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center has received national and international attention for innovation. When we opened in April of 2010, we served 500 meals per day. Today that number is more than 800. We provide a vast array of services, many of them leveraged through collaboration, that attract seniors to the center. Demand for congregate meals will increase as more centers around the country adopt this model.

It is time, however, to rethink the transfer authority. In FY '09, more than \$78 million was transferred out of the congregate program. Half went for home-delivered meals – which is appropriate. The other half went for Title III B services. We cannot afford to take \$39 million in funds intended for nutrition and have them go elsewhere. Only services that relate directly to nutrition should be funded under the transfer authority. Otherwise, the transfers between B and C should be eliminated entirely.

Some of NANASP's other positions include:

- Authorize a Nutrition Resource Center that will identify ways to increase cost-effective food and nutrition services.
- Promote greater flexibility for meal planning that includes cultural considerations while meeting nutritional requirements.
- Improve data collection in the nutrition programs, particularly measures of unmet need, such as waiting lists.
- Develop a stronger role for the nutrition programs in the fight against elder abuse.
- Better recognize the essential role of transportation in the provision of nutrition services.
- Build the capacity of and funding for the Native American Nutrition Programs.

Consider this: If something is not broken why fix it in a way that might break it? Please contact congregate and home delivered meal providers in your state and get their view – particularly on consolidation and transfer -- and then decide on how to reauthorize.

Thank you for allowing me to be here and I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.

Please direct further questions to:

NANASP Executive Director, Robert Blancato (rblancato@matzblancato.com)
NANASP President Paul Downey (paul.downey@servingseniors.org)

NANASP's vision is to reshape the future of nutrition and healthy aging.
NANASP's mission is to strengthen advocacy and education those who help older Americans.