SENIOR NUTRITION LEADERS COMMEND CONGRESS FOR MUCH NEEDED FUNDING INCREASES IN FISCAL YEAR 2018 OMNIBUS BILL

Arlington, VA, March 23, 2018 – Following the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to fund federal programs for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2018, Meals on Wheels America President and CEO Ellie Hollander and National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) Executive Director Bob Blancato released this joint statement:

We commend Congress for passing the bipartisan Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, ending months of federal funding uncertainty for the nutrition programs that daily serve millions of our nation’s most vulnerable seniors.

This $1.3 trillion omnibus funding bill puts the recent Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 to productive use, providing a $59 million increase for Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Programs – both congregate and home-delivered – for the next six months of Fiscal Year 2018. This increase recognizes the unique value of these programs in maintaining the independence and dignity of the older Americans served every day. This legislation also provides an increase of $300 million in funding for the Community Development Block Grant and level funding for the Social Services and Community Services Block Grants that support a number of senior nutrition programs nationwide.

We thank those Members of Congress – as well as their staffs – who pushed to protect and increase funding for OAA Nutrition Programs, especially members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and the 80+ Representatives and 30+ Senators who called for further investments early in the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations process.

We appreciate the leadership and hard work of Senate and House Appropriations Committee Chairmen Cochran (R-MS) and Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), and Ranking Members Leahy (D-VT) and Lowey (D-NY), and Subcommittee Chairmen Blunt (R-MO) and Cole (R-OK) and Ranking Members Murray (D-WA) and DeLauro (D-CT), for reaching a bipartisan compromise and providing critical funding increases. These actions represent a positive step toward enabling senior nutrition programs to address the growing unmet need for meals among our nation’s rapidly aging population – a demographic which is increasingly struggling with hunger and malnutrition. Ensuring adequate resources to help these vulnerable seniors maintain their health and independence would not only serve our nation’s social priorities; such an investment would also bring about significant economic returns in terms of reduced healthcare costs and taxpayer burden.

While the OAA funding increases within the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 are encouraging, we know that even increases of this level are not enough to close the growing gap between seniors in need of services and seniors served. We urge Congress to build on the bipartisan and bicameral support for OAA Nutrition Programs – Congregate, Home-Delivered and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program – and the down payment that was made in this measure throughout the Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations process, and we look forward to working together to make investing in our nation’s seniors’ nutritional needs a priority.
About Meals on Wheels America
Meals on Wheels America is a leadership organization supporting the more than 5,000 community-based programs across the country that are dedicated to addressing senior isolation and hunger. This network serves virtually every community in America and, along with more than two million staff and volunteers, delivers the nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety checks that enable America's seniors to live nourished lives with independence and dignity. By providing funding, leadership, education, research and advocacy support, Meals on Wheels America empowers its local member programs to strengthen their communities, one senior at a time. For more information, or to find a Meals on Wheels provider near you, visit www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org.

About NANASP
Founded in 1977, the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) is proud to be a leading organization advocating for community-based senior nutrition programs and staff. Our member programs represent a wide range of essential services providers who support the nutrition, health and life quality of seniors. With over 1,100 members from across the United States, we are national advocates for senior health and wellbeing who strengthen the policies and programs that nourish seniors. We accomplish this mission through a collective national voice and through local community action. For more information, go to nanasp.org.

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