

The National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) would like to comment on this policy brief on healthy aging.

NANASP, a 1,100-member nonpartisan, nonprofit, membership organization, represents a diverse coalition of individuals, agencies and organizations interested in senior nutrition and other programs that enhance the life quality of older Americans. Our members provide older adults with the means for healthy aging every day through Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III C congregate and home-delivered meals programs and the OAA Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

***The Older Americans Act senior nutrition programs are some of the most effective programs for healthy aging.*** This White House Conference on Aging policy brief mentions the Title III C nutrition programs and their importance in providing good nutrition and socialization for older adults, but does not discuss its preventive health benefits. The OAA nutrition programs, in addition to providing nutrition, also provide nutrition education and wellness checks. For little extra cost, this provides a large return on investment, as problems can be caught even earlier than during a trip to the doctor.

***Older adults and their families need good nutrition to manage their chronic conditions and to optimize their physical, cognitive, and behavioral health.*** The three major chronic diseases that impact 87 percent of seniors—diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol or some combination—can be prevented and/or managed with appropriate nutrition interventions. A lack of good nutrition drives up health care costs. Many older adults who struggle to get adequate nutrition do so through no fault of their own—poverty, poor health, and inability to prepare food are just a few of the factors which may cause malnutrition in older adults. Senior malnutrition—particularly loss of lean body mass—is a growing problem which must be addressed. One in three patients is malnourished upon entry to the hospital. We spend \$157 billion per year overall on disease-related malnutrition in the United States; a malnourished patient's medical costs will be 300% higher.

The related problems of food insecurity and senior hunger must also be addressed. For example, the number of food insecure seniors has more than doubled since 2001, from 2.3 million to 5.3 million. Hunger costs us \$167 billion per year overall due to lost productivity, avoidable healthcare costs, poor education and charity to feed families.

***The White House Conference on Aging has a duty to recognize this growing crisis and to recommend actions to the Administration that would ensure that older adults of all backgrounds can equally enjoy a long, productive, and healthy quality of life.*** Some of the solutions that could be proposed to combat this national emergency which could likely be completed solely by the Administration include:

- Declare food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition as domestic emergencies, which could allow greater resources to be applied to their reductions. Calculate the overall cost to government of these three.
- Expand access to healthy foods in all federally funded nutrition programs; work to reduce the price disparity between cheap unhealthy food and expensive healthy food.

- Add basic malnutrition screening, interventions and other information into the electronic health records of the future and include malnutrition screening (particularly related to lean body mass) and intervention in healthcare quality measures in public and private accountability programs.
- Assist congregate and home-delivered meals programs in modernizing and offering more related health services.
- Continue to request adequate funding levels for Older Americans Act senior nutrition programs in the President's budgets, such as the levels requested in the FY 2016 budget.
- Expand Medicare-covered medical nutrition therapy to include diabetes.
- Address increased protein requirements of older adults and need for increased protein Dietary Reference Intake for this age group.
- Expand the Affordable Care Act Essential Health Benefits to include malnutrition screening and therapy.
- Reexamine the goals of Healthy People 2020 and build in a stronger emphasis on malnutrition identification and prevention and recognition of malnutrition as a key indicator of older adult health.

Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to working with you throughout the remaining Conference activities.