



Statement of Enid A. Borden, Chief Executive Officer,

Meals On Wheels Association of America

Chairman Enzi, Senator Kennedy, Members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and particularly of the Subcommittee on Retirement Security and Aging, I am Enid Borden, CEO of the Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA), and on behalf of the hundreds of home-delivered and congregate senior meal programs that are MOWAA members and the literally hundreds of thousands of Older Americans they serve, I want to thank you for holding this roundtable today. MOWAA is pleased to participate and most encouraged that the Committee has turned its attention to the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act this early in the second session of the 109th. We hope that it will remain a top priority until reauthorization is completed.

For the purposes of this roundtable you have asked that we focus on the broader issue of the effectiveness of the Older Americans Act since the 2000 reauthorization and specifically how the programs have served older Americans. As you might anticipate, I will confine my comments to the benefit of meal services. And as you must also expect, I will say emphatically and without equivocation that senior nutrition services — whether delivered in senior centers or to the doors of frail, homebound men and women in communities across America — have been of significant

benefit to hundreds of thousands of individuals in communities in every state of the country. But saying it that way understates the critically important role those meals and related services play in the lives of people who receive them. Meals furnished under Title III of the Older Americans Act, particularly home-delivered meals, have (1) improved seniors' declining nutritional and health status, (2) they have restored older Americans to wellness, (3) they have contributed to keeping many individuals out of institutions and from isolation (4) they have kept seniors from going hungry. Yes, you heard me correctly — I said they have kept seniors from going hungry. Please think about that as you work through the reauthorization.

Whenever I tell people what I do, the response is usually, "Meals On Wheels is a wonderful program." On the one hand, it is gratifying to have such a positive image. . . the one of the smiling volunteer walking up with a nutritious meal to the front door of a waiting home bound senior. That is an accurate picture in that it portrays the heart of our program. But allowing local senior meal programs to be portrayed only as warm and fuzzy social services program fails to emphasize the critical, often life saving, role these programs play in the lives of the people we serve. Perhaps more serious — and hard to discuss — is that the rosy picture of our successes fails to acknowledge the consequences for those individuals who don't get served because of a lack of resources. It is not a pleasant subject. But we need to admit to those consequences and the tragic fact that hunger exists among the elderly in this, the richest nation on the planet. We need to admit that lack of proper nutrition leads to poor health and even death. Then we need to commit to working together to ensure that not one senior goes hungry.

How do we do that? Incrementally, of course. It starts with raising awareness. Then it relies on resources. I know that you are authorizers and not appropriators, and although I certainly want

to make a pitch for higher appropriation levels, the one proposal that I will raise today only you as the authorizing Committee can enact.

As background, you know: The OAA nutrition program is the largest program administered by the Administration on Aging (AoA). Last year funding for senior nutrition programs (Title III-C1 and III-C2 and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program) accounted for approximately 46 percent of the total agency budget. That is, as authorized and appropriated, it was 46 percent. But as you are also aware, currently the Act allows States to transfer up to 30 percent of the total line item amount between Titles III-B, Supportive Services, and Title III-C, Nutrition Services.

In the five fiscal years since the last reauthorization — 2000 through 2004 — total net transfers from Title III-C to Title III-B was over \$174 million dollars. MOWAA has always supported allowing flexibility to States to shift some funds to meet specific State and local needs. We continue to support some flexibility but, given current needs and the limitation on resources, only under specific conditions. MOWAA proposes that the Act be amended to specify that transfers be allowed to be made between Titles III-B and III-C only if there are no unmet needs in the category for which the allocations were explicitly made. In other words, there should be *no transfer* from Title III-C to Title III-B for non-nutrition related Supportive Services while waiting lists for nutrition services exist in any community or while even one senior goes hungry.

Consistent with this proposal to establish line item integrity, MOWAA also believes that the Act should stipulate that general and administrative dollars must be taken from the line item or category in which the services are performed. In other words, Title III-C dollars may not be used to pay the administrative cost associated with managing Title III-B services.

If I may put the \$174 million I mentioned earlier in context, let me suggest that at an average cost of \$5 per meal, that equates to a loss of approximately 35 million meals. Those funds, if reserved for nutrition, could have gone a long way toward eliminating current waiting lists that more than 4 out of 10 home-delivered meal programs have. Preservation of nutrition funds for nutrition services will help assure that no senior of today or aging Baby Boomer goes hungry.

Before I close, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, let me raise two other points.

Ever since the Mathematica Study was conducted over a decade ago, we have been in the habit of using the concept of waiting lists to measure unmet need. It may be the only mechanism we have, but it is flawed and clearly understates the extent of the real need that exists today and is bound to grow as the Baby Boomers age. For one thing, not all programs keep waiting lists.

Even more significant than that is the fact that not all seniors who could benefit by our services even try to access them. MOWAA is involved in two pilot projects — one called “Community Connections” that is a cooperative agreement with AoA and the other is a partnership with

Humana. Both entail working to see that patients leaving the hospital who need home-delivered meals services get them upon discharge. Our preliminary results with “Community

Connections” demonstrate positive health impact for those seniors, and we will soon be releasing our results. Another important finding of both these projects is that many of these eligible seniors either do not know of the availability of local meal programs or how to access them.

This is another layer of unmet need.

My second point is that the services we do provide are themselves limited. Most programs, again because of resource constraints, can serve only the minimum that the Act allows — one

meal per day, five days per week. Most Americans eat 21 meals per week. My fellow delegates at the 2005 White House Conference on Aging, who participated in the Implementation Strategy Session for the Older Americans Act, listed among their priorities for the future that senior nutrition programs be expanded to three meals per day, 7 days per week. That is a goal that MOWAA embraces and a vision that we share. The impediment to achieving that is a lack of adequate resources.

Having said that, MOWAA acknowledges that the federal government cannot and should not be the sole source of the funding needed to provide services. This Association and our member programs work on a daily basis to raise funds from other sources and to engage other entities within the community in our important work. It helps our programs build capacity and it enriches communities. But the undeniable fact is that the federal commitment, embodied in the Older Americans Act, is the foundation on which we build. Leadership is important; in fact, in a real sense, putting an end to senior hunger depends as much on leadership as it does on food. How the Act directs the use of designated funding streams is vital, particularly in the face of the limitation on federal dollars now and in the near term. Congress can and must lead by reforming policies and setting set priorities to address changing demographics and needs. That is what MOWAA is asking of you today.

Some things — like the rising price of gasoline that has severely impacted our programs by raising their program costs, the changing demographic that will put additional strains on our programs, or even an across-the-board reduction in discretionary spending that have left our programs faced with trying to provide services with shrinking resources — are not within the purview of this Committee or your power to change. But the simple amendment to the statute

that MOWAA proposes is. We implore you to give it your most serious consideration. We would be delighted to work with you and your staffs in any way we can on this issue.

I want to close by thanking you, not just for this opportunity to address you, but for your dedication to improving the lives of America's great resources — its older Americans. You have demonstrated your commitment in the past and America's most vulnerable older adults are counting on you to do so.

Enid A. Borden

Enid Borden serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA), the oldest and largest organization in the United States representing those who provide meal services to people in need. During her 14 year tenure at MOWAA, she has directed the day-to-day operations of the Association and provided leadership to the organization during a period of significant growth and innovative partnership development.

Enid's professional and educational backgrounds have been in the area of communications. She worked as a newspaper reporter, magazine editor and publisher, radio commentator, and TV producer. Borden has also held numerous public affairs and policy positions in the public sector, including Deputy Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs for the Social Security Administration and Director of Public Affairs and Director of Legislative Affairs for what was then the Office of Human Development Services, which included the Administration on Aging, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Borden is on the faculty in the School of Graduate and Continuing Studies at Goucher College in Baltimore and Shenandoah University in Leesburg, Virginia, where she is an instructor of public speaking. She has recently become involved in training traumatically brain injured adults to speak in public.

Enid earned her Bachelor's degree from Alfred University and went on to Adelphi University where she gained a Master's degree. Enid has received a Certificate of Completion in "Essentials of Decision Making" from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Her work has also earned her recognition in *Who's Who in the Media and Communications*.