



911 18th Street North | Saint Cloud, MN 56303
320.650.1642 | 800.830.8254
donate@ccstcloud.org | www.ccstcloud.org

March 8, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of **Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud**, I ask for your support for **Meals for Seniors** this legislative session — please pass H.F. 2523/S.F. 2244. The health of older Minnesotans depends upon this critical funding for food for our most vulnerable older adults.

Programs that provide meals to older adults are severely underfunded and are not meeting the needs of older Minnesotans. The Minnesota Senior Nutrition Program has not had a funding increase in the past 20 years, while the need and costs have grown exponentially. From 2020 to 2022 alone, the cost of meals has increased 26%. Meal providers are responding by serving fewer people or fewer meals per person, with devastating impacts on older adults.

In 2021, Minnesota nutrition providers across the state served 3.4 million meals to 53,659 older adults. Of those older adults, 69% were homebound older adults, 23% were 85+ years old, 45% were living alone, 7% were minority, and 62% were under 200% of the Poverty Level. Minnesota nutrition providers have been essential to addressing hunger, malnutrition, and advancing the overall health and well-being of thousands of older adults in our state.

Catholic Charities Senior Dining is a provider in the group who serves persons who are 60+. We target low-income seniors who are having trouble with access to food. In 2022, 384,164 total meals were served to 6,977 unduplicated seniors in our 14-county service area. The needs in our communities continue to increase. Current funding levels do not support the nutritional needs of seniors in Minnesota.

Catholic Charities implores you to add \$20 million (\$10 million per year) to the Minnesota Board on Aging biennial appropriation —amending Minnesota Statutes, section 256.9752 — to meet minimum nutritional needs for older adults. Visit mn4a.org for more information.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Pareja, Executive Director
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud
320.650.1530 steve.pareja@ccstcloud.org