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Serving the 11 Counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona

March 8, 2023

Dear Mr. Herring,

On behalf of the Southeastern MN Area Agency on Aging (SEMAAA), I ask for your support for **Meals for Seniors** this legislative session — please pass H.F. 2523. The health of older Minnesotans depends upon this critical funding for food for our most vulnerable older adults.

According to Defeat Malnutrition Today, one in two older adults is at risk for malnutrition. Food insecurity disproportionately affects those from low-income, BIPOC and rural communities who often live in food deserts, have limited English proficiency or lack access to transportation. Inadequate nutrition has a negative impact on health, erodes quality of life and contributes to rising healthcare costs.

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 2022, SEMAAA supported our two Home Delivered Meals providers- Semcac and Three Rivers Community Action to offer meals to 136,409 older adults throughout SE MN. Semcac also supported several congregate sites to bounce back post pandemic to provide 135,520 meals. For seniors in rural areas, this program may be the only access they have to a nutritious meal, and we see the demand for meals growing.

We need your help to reach our goal – please support our efforts 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](https://mn4a.org) for more information.

Kind Regards,

Laurie Brownell  
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Executive Director