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**Subject:** How do we measure success? One meal at a time. A letter from Pam Dukes

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## How do we measure success? One meal at a time.

*A note from Executive Director Pam Dukes, in response to proposed federal budget cuts to senior programs*

Last week, the President sent his budget to Congress, and although his budget is short on details, the facts that we do have are concerning, considering that in South Carolina, the number of seniors is expected to double between 2010 and 2040. Under the President's budget, several Federal programs are marked for elimination, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Corporation for National and Community Service. In addition, a significant reduction in funding has been proposed for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Funding from these Federal Agencies makes up about 38% of our [Meals on Wheels](#) program, and about 45% of Senior Resources' overall budget. These cuts would have a serious negative impact on the services that Senior Resources provides.

Our Meals on Wheels program is primarily funded by HHS through the agency's administration of the Older Americans Act. Although we don't know how HHS would implement a cut, it is difficult to imagine a scenario where we would not have a significant reduction in funding.

The elimination of the Community Development Block Grant program removes a past and potentially future funding stream for the Meals on Wheels program.

The elimination of the Corporation for National and Community Service

would result in the loss of both our [Foster Grandparent](#) and [Senior Companion](#) volunteer programs. These programs provide tutoring and mentoring to at risk children, and companionship to home-bound vulnerable seniors.

Not known is the fate of the Social Services Block Grant, an HHS program that funds our [Home Care](#) program. The Home Care program provides personal assistance to frail seniors in their homes. What we do know is that these programs help keep seniors healthy and independent in their homes, and out of more costly healthcare settings. One year of Meals on Wheels service costs less than one day in a hospital. Our Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs allow seniors to earn a small stipend, which often prevents them from having to choose between food and medication.

Our programs are successful public-private partnerships, and have been proven effective in positively affecting the health, safety and independence of seniors. The needs in the community have increased significantly, and our waiting lists have continued to grow as the population ages. Funding has not kept pace with seniors' needs, and the President's proposed budget would increase the likelihood that the frail, vulnerable seniors we serve would be forgotten.

South Carolina is [fourth-worst in the country](#) in terms of seniors facing hunger and food insecurity. At this time when the elderly population is growing exponentially and the needs of seniors in our community are great, we should be increasing funding for the services that keep them healthy, safe, and independent in their own homes.

## How can you help?

- [Donate](#) to ensure local seniors will continue to eat. One meal costs just \$7.38. To feed a senior for one month costs \$160. To feed a senior for a full year costs \$1,919.
- Call your [Senator or Representative](#) to share your concerns.
- [Volunteer](#) to see firsthand how the simple act of delivering a hot meal makes a huge difference.

Give today to ensure our elderly neighbors get a meal each day.

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