



Letter to Editor

Dear Editor:

Recently, White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney proposed eliminating a number of federal programs, including the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which help fund programs like Meals on Wheels, a 64-year-old organization that provides a nutritious meal, safety check, and friendly visit to people in need, including the elderly, mentally and physically disabled, and veterans.

In his announcement, Mulvaney scoffed specifically at Meals on Wheels, saying, "We're not going to spend [money] on programs that cannot show that they actually deliver the promises that we've made to people." Doing away with Meals on Wheels, he said, would "show compassion."

This is insulting and patently false. As the executive director of Meals on Wheels of Sarasota, I see firsthand how profoundly the program impacts the community.

Contrary to Mr. Mulvaney's ludicrous assertions, Meals on Wheels does make a difference, it does have critical results, and taking away food and human contact from vulnerable people most certainly does not "show compassion."

In our community alone, Sarasota's Meals on Wheels annually serves more than 160,000 meals to homebound seniors, veterans, disabled people, individuals recovering from surgery or coping with a serious illness, and even children. In most cases, the one meal they receive from us is all they will eat that day. In short: we provide the sustenance that keeps them alive.

We think saving a life is a great "result." How about you?

Leola is a Sarasota resident whose life depends on Meals on Wheels. She lives on Social Security, disability checks, and is undergoing chemotherapy and dialysis treatments. She is mentally and physically exhausted. Six days a week, cheery volunteers deliver meals to her home, offering her a respite from her burdens. Besides nourishing her body and soul, the free meals allow her to pay her bills so she can continue living at home, which numerous studies have cited as a factor for increased wellbeing.

We fear that this proposed budget cut would leave millions of people like Leola in dire situations. For 2.4 million Americans, Meals on Wheels makes the difference between continuing to live in their homes—where they want to be—rather than moving to a nursing home.

Our effort benefits everyone. Enabling people to remain at home averts costly healthcare expenses incurred through Medicare and Medicaid. By preventing and expediting recovery from illness, injury and surgery, Meals on Wheels organizations across America reduce unnecessary visits to the emergency room, admissions and readmits to hospitals, and premature placement in nursing homes. This saves all taxpayers significant money. Current studies show that spending one day in a hospital (or six days in a nursing home) costs more than providing one person a daily meal for an entire year.

We encourage our friends in the community to do two things for Meals on Wheels if you believe our mission of providing a nutritious meal to our neighbors in need has merit. First, help us raise funds so that we can continue to meet our mission by visiting www.mealsonwheelssarasota.com/donate. Second, contact Senator Marco Rubio, Senator Bill Nelson and Representative Vern Buchanan. Let them

hear your voice. Please share your stories about why Meals on Wheels programs are crucial.

Currently, one in six seniors in Florida contends with food insecurity, meaning they do not know when their next meal will be. The average life expectancy is rising, as is the cost of living, which will have ramifications in the years to come.

Now, more than ever, Meals on Wheels needs financial support to meet the needs of a fast-growing senior population.

Thank you.

Marjorie Broughton, Executive Director

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