

March 24, 2022

Minnesota Senate
Veterans and Military Finance and Policy Committee Members



Chair Lang and Members,

In partnership with our 33 member agencies, Metro Meals on Wheels serves over 1.5 million meals to seniors and people living with disabilities in the Twin Cities area. We provide information and referral, enrollment services, financial support, outreach, technical support and manage a central Meals on Wheels kitchen for our partners while each neighborhood site works directly with volunteers and meal recipients in their communities.

The last two years has been unprecedented in the demand for our services. A global pandemic that highlighted the importance of remaining in your own home while living a healthy and productive life thrust Meals on Wheels onto center stage. While normally thought of as a service solely for older adults, we delivered nutritious, ready-to-eat meals to homebound individuals of every age in 2020 and 2021 and the need hasn't gone away. Despite the ever-changing landscape of living with COVID-19, we are still serving over 50% more individuals than we were before the pandemic. We have a saying on our staff that the pandemic didn't create the need for Meals on Wheels, it uncovered it.

Perhaps even more important than the meal we provide is the social connection. Even before the pandemic, as many as 42% of our recipients stated that their meals on Wheels volunteer was the only person they saw that day. Just that brief interaction carries value and has the capacity to lift someone's day. In fact, 60% of our recipients say their interaction with Meals on Wheels makes them feel less lonely or less isolated.

We support SF2933. We are unsure of how many veterans receive Meals on Wheels because we do not ask for that information, however, I know the needs of many veterans are similar to what we see with our Meals on Wheels recipients. Many live alone, are lower income and many have more than one condition that makes it challenging to prepare their own meals. Additionally, many are under the age of 60 which makes them ineligible to receive meals through our federal funding sources.

Meals on Wheels is ready to help! We have several examples of similar partnerships with Allina Health Care, Health Partners, the MN Board on Aging and the Department of Human Services, in which we coordinate participant enrollment, volunteer participation, prepare a diverse choice of diets and menu options and the ability to track data for clients, meals and wrap-a-round services. Please pass SF2933 so we can continue to ensure our vision that everyone that needs a meal is able to receive one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick Rowan", written over a white background.

Patrick Rowan
Executive Director