

Chair Noor and Members of Human Services Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Elder Justice Center, 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.

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.

The Minnesota Elder Justice Center does not provide food supports to individuals, but works with individuals experiencing abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of older adults. Our program participants ability to maintain adequate food, shelter and safety are all critical to their overall health and well-being. In addition, the personal connection opportunities senior nutrition programs provide help address isolation of older adults, which is one way to help prevent elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

The Minnesota Elder Justice Center 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,



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