

Chair Noor, members of the committee, my name is Roxanne Jenkins, and I am the Associate Vice President of Older Adults Services at Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, in support of House File [HF2523](#) (Fischer) -

LSS has over 50 years of experience serving as a respected, trustworthy meals provider offering nutritious, well-balanced, affordable meals to older adults through congregate dining and home delivered meals in 165 communities in 43 counties across the state. In 2022, LSS Meals provided over 1.5 million meals to Older Adults in rural communities and only see the need growing.

More Minnesotans need access to Minnesota's Senior Nutrition Program. Our older adult population is growing and so are the food insecurities they are facing. Additionally, the costs of food and transportation for meals has drastically increased. In 2022, we saw increases in food and supplies increase by 15 – 22%. We too are experiencing staffing shortages, often competing with manufacturing or other entities with higher wage offerings, making it necessary for us to increase our wages to try to keep pace and fill necessary positions in our kitchens.

LSS Meals primary service area is Greater Minnesota, serving from Hallock in Kittson County, Baudette in Lake of the Woods, to Walker in Cass County, and Luverne in Rock County and numerous towns and townships between. Many of the communities we serve are what we call “resource light” and sometimes our LSS Meals program is the only resource around. It is an honor to serve and support our neighbors.

I have learned that many of you have a story or experience with Senior Nutrition as well.

My first involvement with Senior Nutrition was when I was 14 and my mom had a brilliant idea of having me join her in delivering Meals on Wheels. To say it had an impact on me, would be putting it mildly. I saw and experienced first-hand, what that meal and that brief visit meant to every person we delivered a meal to – such a great life lesson.

It's been a while since that day, however, for over 28 years, I've dedicated my career to serving and supporting Older Adults and Meals was the cornerstone. It's been 20 years since we have increased state funding for meals and now is the time to make this much needed investment.

Thank you again for this opportunity.