

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

Sen. Casey's Opening Statement Hearing on Senior Nutrition July 12, 2017

“Thank you, Chairman Collins, for holding this hearing and for allowing us to discuss the issues of nutrition among older Americans and food insecurity as well.

“Today, far too many older Americans don't know where their next meal is coming from, as Senator Collins just outlined.

“These are the hard working Americans who fought our wars, taught our children and built the middle class. They should not have to struggle in their golden years for something as basic as the security of knowing they will have enough to eat.

“In 2014, 10.2 million seniors aged 60 and up faced this terrifying insecurity. More than 13 percent of seniors, in Pennsylvania alone, reported food insecurity.

“That means tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians are facing food insecurity. Those who are food insecure often suffer in silence—embarrassed to admit that they need help.

“Lack of adequate nutrition creates significant economic costs to society through increased doctor visits, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and disability.

“Meals on Wheels reports that the disease-related cost of malnutrition is estimated to be approximately \$51 billion. Their report finds that about 60 percent of older adults in emergency rooms are either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition. And up to 33 percent of older adults admitted to the hospital may be malnourished.

“The menu of nutrition programs supported by the federal government can help.

“We will hear from researchers today who will tell us that investing in nutritious meals for seniors contributes to better health outcomes and lower health care spending for the individual and the system.

“For most of us in this room, we don't need research to tell that healthy eating leads to healthier living. It is just common sense. It is for this reason that I will continue to vocally oppose any cuts to:

- SNAP;
- Meals on Wheels;

- Congregate Meals;
- The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program; and
- The Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which funds the senior food box that our witness, Mrs. Taylor, receives.

“These programs help seniors from having to decide between putting food on the table – specifically nutritious food—and refilling a prescription.

“Unfortunately, seniors are right now facing a threat to their nutrition and health care at the same time. The proposed budget cuts to senior nutrition programs paired with proposals to decimate Medicaid could devastate the health and financial security of entire families.

“We are better than that in America. So, I am grateful to our witnesses for joining us here today to shed light on the important role that federal government programs play in promoting healthy aging.

“Thank you very much.”

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