



TESTIMONY

Presented by

**Lorraine Cortès-Vázquez
Commissioner**

on

**Department for the Aging
Meal Programming**

before the

**New York City Council
Committee on Aging**

on

**Monday, September 22, 2025
At 1:00 p.m.**

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, and members of the Aging Committee. My name is Lorraine Cortès-Vázquez and I am the Commissioner for the New York City Department for the Aging (NYC Aging). I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you today about meal programming and services for older New Yorkers, the ability for older adults to age-in-place in New York City, and the impacts of the bills on today's agenda on our mutual goal of building an age-inclusive city centered around community-based care. As we frequently say, nearly two million New Yorkers are aged 60 or older, and that number is expected to increase significantly in the next decade. As the city's population ages, so does the need for expanded services to help older adults remain in their homes and communities with dignity. This includes a growing demand for caregiving support, resources, and especially mental health services. Older adults are particularly vulnerable to challenges like social isolation, financial insecurity, and limited access to culturally competent care, which can worsen such conditions as depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline.

Food Programs at NYC Aging

A common denominator of challenges faced by many older adults today is food insecurity and the needs for increased nutrition resources among vulnerable populations. Two of NYC Aging's core services are Older Adult Centers (OACs) and the Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program which are intrinsically connected to providing meals and nutrition assistance to older adults. While we don't typically view congregate or home delivered meals as "food as medicine," these are essential services for healthy living and preventing social isolation. The work done by OACs, HDM programs, and our CMA providers combat poverty and financial insecurity while also connecting homebound older adults to in-home services which address their needs when struggling with activities of daily living. For older adults experiencing food insecurity, it is typically represented by financial insecurity, and we are continually working to meet those two distinct needs within our network of providers.

We continue to hit milestones in meal delivery, with a current record of more than 10 million meals served to older New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. This includes 6.1 million meals served at the 300-plus OACs in the network and 4.2 million meals delivered by our HDM providers. We are pleased to share that we are on track to match that number again in the new fiscal year, and are confident that as the aging population grows in New York City and across the country, NYC Aging will be serving more than 10 million meals annually in the years to come. This is an incredible achievement when considering the dollar-for-dollar impact of meals provision as an anti-poverty measure in the lives of older adults. When the Older Americans Act (OAA) was passed 60 years ago this July in 1965, a key reason for creating that pivotal legislation was the address older adult poverty nationwide through nutrition and supportive services. While much has changed since the 1960s about being an older adult and the state of the aging population, the basic human needs for dignified aging—meals, health, agency, and income—remain the same.

Continued Older Adult Advocacy

Similar to the successes seen in our meals programming is our work through the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers which utilizes cross-collaboration techniques to address the needs of older adults in a range of areas. This includes housing needs and we are proud of the work done in the Housing Subcommittee which reviewed the New York City Housing Preservation and Development's Housing and Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS) to better understand how housing choice, availability, and accessibility impacts older adults. Additionally, we have collaborated with HPD surrounding Universal Design improvements in buildings which contribute to the overall impact on community care that we see in New York City. Ultimately, NYC Aging does not have the full perspective of housing construction needs and we rely on that relationship with HPD for that expertise. This information will better inform our agencies joint advocacy as we address housing needs among older adults.

Additionally, we have continued to pioneer improvements in the tech and digital literacy space. Just last month, we celebrated the expansion of the Neighborhood Tech Help program, a partnership between NYC Aging, HPD, New York Public Library, Presbyterian Senior Services, where older adults who are Section 8 tenants in the Bronx will have greater access to digital platforms and devices. This program is in their communities and homes, serving NYCHA facilities, older adult centers, libraries, and other community facilities. We continue to

focus our mission on connecting older adults to services, like digital literacy education, which greatly serve their needs.

Legislation

I know that the general purpose of today's hearing is to address the four pieces of legislation that are being introduced today. This includes Introduction 237, a bill to establish a grab-and-go meal program; Introduction 770, a bill to require home delivered meals every day of the calendar year; Introduction 725, a bill to require HPD and NYC Aging report on accessibility for older adults in multiple dwelling units; and Introduction 238, a bill to establish a tech support program for older adults.

Regarding Introductions 237 and 770, we agree that these bills could improve meal delivery and nutrition programs for older adults, but want to highlight operational challenges which can be addressed during the negotiation phase as these bills age. Particularly regarding grab-and-go options at OACs, we are mindful of the federal requirement in the Older Americans Act in Title III C-1 congregate meal funding necessitates that congregate meals provided at OACs and services happen at the same locations. Without consideration of this OAA mandate, or changes to federal law, there will be funding implications, which might diminish the role of the federal government in reimbursing those meals. Similarly, Introduction 770, which would necessitate 7-days of daily meal deliveries, is currently achieved through public-private partnerships to supplement NYC Aging HDM contracts. Nonetheless, the daily meal delivery requirement is difficult to achieve given labor needs and operational challenges seen in all our programs and we expect this would result in large cost implications for this program.

Regarding Introduction 725, which would require Aging to report on older adult and accessible dwelling units, based on our discussions with HPD, they do not have a way of tracking which units house older adults across the breadth of housing types across the City. While they fund older adult housing through their SARA program, that program is a portion of housing types for older adults. Furthermore, we are not aware of any administrative datasets that track or would be able to track the data required in Introduction 725. We would be open to connecting with the Council about publicly available datasets that include the information that Council is seeking through this bill. Finally, Introduction 238 would establish a technical support program for older adults. Technology literacy is an issue that NYC Aging is committed to and actively supports. Older adults are welcome to take a variety of courses offered at Older Adult Centers which was further improved through Council legislation to give greater access to courses like utilizing email as well as understanding and navigating telehealth options. In truth, digital and technological literacy are paramount goals to achieving the spirit of this bill; however, the City does not have the capability to execute a large-scale IT support program, including devices the City does not have the ability to access or control. NYC Aging is committed to advocating for the needs of older adults and ensuring that partner agencies who are responsible for aspects of an older adult's life or experience know and apply that perspective.

Conclusion

As always, I am immensely proud of the work our staff and provider network at NYC Aging accomplish every day. We are consistently working to be more innovative and efficient in meeting the diverse and growing needs of New York City's older adults. With your continued partnership, we can ensure that older New Yorkers are not only cared for, but are also celebrated, respected, and have every opportunity to live fulfilling lives. I'm happy to further discuss these important pieces of legislation heard today. Thank you.

**Testimony of AARP New York
New York City Council Committee on Aging
September 22, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the City Council Committee on Aging.

My name is Kevin Jones, and I am the AARP New York Associate State Director for Advocacy. I am here today on behalf of our 750,000 members in New York City and the more than 3.5 million older adults living in the five boroughs.

New York City's older adult population is growing faster than any other age group. Between 2012 and 2022, the number of New Yorkers age 65 and over grew by 34 percent. With this growth comes a clear mandate: we must ensure our systems evolve to meet the needs of older adults and allow them to age with dignity, security, and independence.

The package of bills before you today is an important step toward that goal. Collectively, they would expand access to nutritious meals, help close the digital divide, and gather critical data needed to support aging in place. These issues touch the lives of older New Yorkers every single day.

AARP New York strongly supports Int. 0238 and urges the Council to go even further to guarantee its success. Technology is no longer a luxury but a necessity for daily life. Older adults must be able to schedule medical appointments, renew benefits, pay rent, and stay connected to loved ones online. Yet too many are left behind. Research from [Citymeals on Wheels](#) shows that 45 percent of their clients lack internet access or use it as little as possible, leaving them cut off from vital tools and information that could help them stay healthy, informed, and independent.

This legislation would require the Department for the Aging and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications to develop a technical support program for older adults. To make it effective, AARP urges that it include multilingual, on-demand assistance by phone and in-person, targeted outreach to underserved communities, and hands-on training paired with device lending programs. Digital equity is health equity, and this bill would help ensure that no older adult is left disconnected.

AARP also supports Int. 0770, which would require home-delivered meals to be provided seven days a week, 365 days a year. For thousands of homebound older adults, these meals are a lifeline and often their only reliable source of nutrition and human contact. Interruptions in service can lead to malnutrition, hospitalizations, and premature loss of independence. The same Citymeals' research shows that 87 percent of recipients say these meals help them stay in their homes. This is not just about nutrition; it is about dignity and autonomy. **However, we must pair this expansion with funding to ensure providers can meet the demand without compromising quality or sustainability.**

Similarly, AARP supports Int. 0237-2024, which would create a grab-and-go meal program at older adult centers. Nearly half of older New Yorkers who use older adult centers or receive

home-delivered meals report experiencing food insecurity in the past year, and nationally, food insecurity among adults 50+ has reached its highest level in nearly a decade. Grab-and-go meals are essential for those who cannot stay for congregate meals due to caregiving responsibilities, work schedules, or mobility challenges. The city must increase funding alongside this expansion to prevent unfunded mandates that would strain providers already operating on razor-thin margins.

Finally, AARP supports Int. 0725-2024, which would require NYC Aging and HPD to report on how many older New Yorkers live in apartment buildings and how many of those units are retrofitted for accessibility. Without accurate, neighborhood-level data, the city cannot target resources effectively. This bill will help identify gaps and guide investment in home modifications, new construction, and retrofits that enable older adults to remain safely in their homes and communities.

Older New Yorkers built this city and made it great. Passing and fully funding these bills would send a clear and powerful message that New York City values its older residents and is committed to ensuring they can age with dignity in the communities they call home.

Thank you.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

191 Joralemon Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201

**Testimony of Joseph Rosenberg
Executive Director, Catholic Community Relations Council
New York City Council Committee on Aging
Oversight- NYC Department for the Aging Meal Programming
September 22, 2022**

Good morning, Chair Hudson, and member of the City Council Committee on Aging. I am Joseph Rosenberg, Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council, representing both the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens on local policy and legislative issues.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens have been providing food, shelter clothing, and other essential services to New Yorkers for over a century. Our 80 food pantries throughout the five boroughs provide over 18 million meals annually to hungry New Yorkers. We provide many services for seniors and are one of the largest providers of housing for low-income elderly in the country with tens of thousands of dwelling units reserved for this population. Many of these developments included recreation and community centers for the elderly as well as large modern cooking facilities where residents receive hot nutritious meals.

We and other nonprofit human services providers are always seeking ways to support our older New Yorkers. Several bills on today's Committee agenda do exactly that and are strongly supported. They include Int. 237 which would expand the "grab and go meal" to centers for older adults. This would create additional and convenient opportunities for seniors to receive nutritious meals on a daily basis. Although meals would continue to be provided in centers where seniors congregate for recreational and other services, a "grab and go" program expansion would provide a food option for seniors who are reluctant to spend time with others due to health concerns and prefer to eat by themselves or with a smaller group of friends.

We also support Int. 238, which creates a technical support program for older adults to become adept in using computers, phones and navigating telehealth services. Technology can be extremely intimidating and becomes more complicated on a daily basis. This bill would allow older New Yorkers to gain confidence in their ability to access vital information to meet their daily essential needs including choosing health care providers and physicians. This excellent bill would allow this program to be widely used by making it available in all designated citywide languages. We do urge, however, that funding be allocated to support this program so the financial burden of creating and maintaining this program does not fall on the nonprofit human service provider sector.

We support the concept of Int. 770 which appears to be focused on providing daily meals for the homebound elderly. We do, however, have concerns with the language and absence of funding dedicated to the bill's mandate. Let me explain.

The home delivered meals program for older adults is indispensable and often a lifeline for many of our elderly New Yorkers. Both Catholic Charities' deliver several hundred thousand meals to our homebound elderly clients annually. Our contracts to deliver such meals are with both the NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA) and Citymeals. The DFTA contracts are for the five weekdays, while the Citymeals contracts cover the weekend.

Qualified homebound older New Yorkers receive two meals on weekends. Both are delivered on Saturday, which includes a fresh meal to be eaten that day and a refrigerated, or frozen one to be reheated and eaten on Sunday. Of course, if the client ever needs assistance heating the second meal, our case workers are always available for that purpose.

The language in Int. 770 is vague. It is unclear if the intent is to require providers to deliver a meal to the client daily, or to ensure that a client receives a meal 7 days a week. 365 days a year. The distinction is significant. If a client is to receive a delivery meal daily, it can create an unfunded burden on nonprofit providers to add staff for an additional delivery day. This would be opposed, especially at a time when nonprofit service providers are besieged with devastating program cuts on the federal level.

If the intent is to expand the weekday meal delivery program provided by DFTA to require that 7 days' worth of meals would be delivered to homebound clients, that would be supported but it would be essential that DFTA be provided with additional funding for this purpose. Expanding this program would also allow Citymeals, instead of using their funding to provide the Saturday and Sunday meals to the homebound, to be able to provide additional meals to needy elderly clients or fill other food security needs for the homebound elderly.

We will of course ensure, as always, that our homebound elderly clients receive 7 meals for each day of the week, but urge the Council to clarify the intended result of Int. 770 and to ensure it does not become an unfunded mandate.

Thank you.



**Chinese-American Planning Council
Testimony Before the Committee on Aging
Chair, Council Member Crystal Hudson
September 22nd, 2025**

Thank you Chair Hudson and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities.

To that end, we are grateful to provide testimony about the issues that greatly impact our communities. CPC serves over 12,000 older adults annually through our culturally-appropriate, linguistically accessible, community-based senior centers, where they participate in classes and social activities, access nutrition, health and mental health services, and get connected to resources and support. We house over 300 seniors through our affordable housing units. And we serve over 3,000 older adults and people with disabilities through our Home Attendant Program.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in New York State, and among them, older adults represent the most rapidly expanding age group. Alarming, more than one in three Asian American older adults live below the poverty line, and over two-thirds are Limited English Proficient. These figures point to systemic barriers that leave many older Asian Americans vulnerable, a trend mirrored across New York's broader aging population.

New York State currently has the fourth oldest population in the nation, with 3.7 million people aged 60 and older. By 2030, that number will grow to 5.2 million, including nearly 2 million people aged 75 and up. We know that the needs of older New Yorkers are increasing rapidly, and it is critical that our City responds with urgency and care.

CPC is here today to testify in strong support of three critical pieces of legislation: Intro. 237 and Intro. 238, sponsored by Council Member Hudson, and Intro. 770, sponsored by Council Member Lee. Together, these bills represent an important step forward in addressing food insecurity, digital exclusion, and the daily challenges that older New Yorkers face.



According to a [2024 report](#) by Citymeals on Wheels in partnership with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, nearly half of older New Yorkers experienced food insecurity in the past year and among those receiving home-delivered meals, that number climbed to 60%. Many are unable to shop for groceries or cook for themselves, with over 40% reporting difficulty accessing groceries and 15% saying they are never able to cook at all. These statistics are indicative of the isolation, hunger, and unmet needs experienced by our older New Yorkers in every borough.

The same report found that 65% of older adults live on less than \$15,000 a year, and nearly a third do not receive Social Security. For many, there is simply no one to turn to: 45% do not have friends or family who can help them with even one meal a day. Nearly 40% report that loneliness or depression is a regular part of their lives.

These numbers paint a stark picture, but they also highlight how effective our existing food programs can be when resourced properly. Nearly 90% of survey participants said that home-delivered meals help them remain in their homes, allowing them to age with dignity and independence. Many also reported improvements in their health and diet, and half said they would benefit from receiving two or more meals per day. These findings underscore the importance of passing Intro. 770, which would ensure home-delivered meals are provided 365 days a year.

We also urge passage of Intro. 237, which gives older adult centers the flexibility to provide meals in ways that meet the unique needs of their communities. For many seniors, particularly those who are immunocompromised, socially anxious, or who simply prefer to eat alone, grab-and-go meals are a necessity. This flexibility supports dignity, autonomy, and public health.

Equally critical is Intro. 238, which addresses the digital divide that continues to isolate many older New Yorkers. Too many seniors were never given the opportunity to build digital literacy skills, and this lack of access limits everything from accessing resources like healthcare to social connection. Investing in culturally and linguistically appropriate digital literacy programs is not optional, it is essential to ensuring that all seniors can thrive in a rapidly changing technological-focused world. We must meet them where they are: with patience, language access, and empathy.

But none of these measures will be successful unless they are fully and sustainably funded. Our older adults have spent their lives building this city, it is our responsibility to ensure they are not left behind in their later years. We are strongly urging the Council to pass and fund these bills, not just as policy, but as a moral commitment to care for those who once cared for us.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify on issues that greatly impact our communities. If there are any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy & Research Manager at achen9@cpc-nyc.org.



Oversight Hearing: Department for the Aging's Meal Programming
September 22nd, 2025

TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS

Before the New York City Council

Committee on Aging, Honorable Crystal Hudson, Chair

Submitted by:

Emma Bessire, Senior Associate, Policy and Advocacy

Citymeals on Wheels

Citymeals on Wheels is a vital part of the New York City aging ecosystem, working in partnership with the City and its network of meal providers to fill a significant gap in home-delivered meal (HDM) programs by funding the delivery of meals on weekends. Additionally, Citymeals has provided emergency meals to homebound older adults across the city during crises from 9/11 to COVID-19 and during localized emergencies like power outages. Finally, having learned from a survey of home delivered meals recipients that 60% still experienced food insecurity, Citymeals has expanded its supplemental food programs and piloted a second meal program and a shopping assistance program. In FY24, Citymeals provided over 2 million meals to nearly 22,000 older adults across all five boroughs.

Due to population growth, rising food insecurity, and rapidly increasing costs of basic needs like food and housing, the need for comprehensive food programs for older adults is more urgent than ever. In the past two years, Citymeals has worked hard to expand our programming in order to get more food to more older adults through diverse programming. We have implemented programs getting additional food to those who need it most and built

partnerships with food pantries so that we can ensure their services are reaching people who cannot regularly leave their homes to shop for groceries. We have expanded our mobile food pantry to deliver shelf-stable items and produce to homebound older adults and even piloted a client-choice model food pantry with the West Side Campaign Against Hunger. Ending food insecurity among older adults in our city will take an expansion of existing elder nutrition programs, the creation of new models for addressing hunger (such as those we've piloted), and ensuring programs across the board are supported with adequate baseline funding from the City.

Citymeals would like to express our support for the bills before the Committee today and we commend the bill sponsors in their work to expand food and technology access for older adults. With food insecurity on the rise, ensuring New York City's aging programs are reaching homebound older adults is more important than ever. In order to address the crisis in elder hunger, New York City's congregate and home-delivered meal programs must be considered as anti-hunger interventions, not just opportunities to decrease social isolation or provide a little support to families. As such, the City's elder nutrition programs should be expanded to offer more food to older adults in ways that provide them with the dignity of choice in what, where, when, and how they eat. Furthermore, the City's existing food assistance infrastructure must be properly funded at a baseline to ensure continuity of nutrition support.

Background

Of the 1.8 million people aged 60 and older in New York City, 18% live below the poverty line and an increasing number are immigrants, women, and people living alone with limited social support.¹ The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have compounded these challenges, dramatically increasing food costs that persist to this day. As a result, we have seen food insecurity among older New Yorkers emerge as a crisis. Existing nutrition assistance programs that many older adults access, such as SNAP and food pantries, are largely inaccessible to the

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 2022. [Population 60 Years and Over in the United States. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0102](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S0102?q=S0102&g=160XX00US3651000). Accessed at: <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S0102?q=S0102&g=160XX00US3651000>

many older adults who are unable to prepare their own meals from the groceries they are able to access or simply cannot shop for groceries regularly. And our recent research found that the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs simply do not go far enough to fill their meal gap, providing only 1 meal a day, 5 days a week. While Citymeals steps in to privately fund weekend meals for home-delivered meals recipients, 60% still experience food insecurity.² We must adapt existing programs to be more accessible to older adults and create new, expanded programs to ensure that the City's most vulnerable older residents have the food they need to remain safely in their homes.

The two main food programs targeting older New Yorkers generally provide one prepared meal on weekdays only; one program operates in a congregate setting at Older Adult Centers, and the other provides home-delivery of these meals to those who cannot regularly get to a center. Last year, 153,220 older New Yorkers attended an older adult center and 24,472 received home-delivered meals (HDM).³ These food programs were established in 1965 through the Older Americans Act, which still only requires that they serve one meal a day, five days a week. We have long known that this falls short in meeting the needs of the most food insecure older adults who cannot regularly access additional food. In a national survey from 2018, 66 percent of home-delivered and 54 percent of congregate meal recipients reported that these meals provide half or more of their daily food intake.⁴

Our research, done in partnership with CUNY's Urban Food Policy Institute last year, confirmed that the status quo leaves too many older adults hungry. We surveyed 500 older New Yorkers participating in the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs to learn more about how they were meeting their food needs beyond the one meal a day they received through these programs. Some key findings from our research include:

² Citymeals and CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. [*Older Adult Hunger, Food Services, and SNAP Participation in New York City. 2024.*](#)

³ *Preliminary Mayor's Management Report*. January 2024. Accessed at: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/dfta.pdf>

⁴ Administration on Community Living. *FY18 Older Americans Act Report to Congress*. June 2021. Accessed at: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2021-06/ACL_FY2018%20OAA%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf

- **48% of all respondents “sometimes” or “often” experienced food insecurity.** This number went up to 60% for HDM recipients.
- Affordability was a clear barrier with **65% of respondents living on \$15,000/yr or less.**
- Physical limitations were experienced by many, including those receiving congregate meals **41% said they are only sometimes or never able to shop for groceries,** and 38% have a limited ability to prepare their own food.
- Additionally, **45% reported having little to no support** from family, friends, or a personal care attendant.
- After physical health, **use of technology was a top concern for 37% of participants.**
- Other food programs are underutilized given the depth of need indicated: **only 56% received SNAP and only 18% had used a food pantry.**
 - 34% of those receiving SNAP said the benefit was not enough to meet their needs, and food pantries are not always accessible to homebound older adults.

And things are about to get even worse for these older New Yorkers as billions in funding for SNAP, Medicaid,⁵ Section 8 housing assistance,⁶ the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP),⁷ and countless other federal benefits that older adults rely on have been cut or are at risk. We have already heard directly from meal recipients that they are afraid their regular home-delivered meals will not continue. For low-income, homebound older adults, any cuts to these benefits would drastically impact their ability to pay for food and other basic needs.

The problem is clear: New York City’s homebound older adults are not accessing the food and support they need to thrive. Many are unable to access existing anti-hunger infrastructure due to a limited ability to physically access food pantries and the mental and physical difficulties that come from preparing a meal with ingredients from pantries. Without a home-delivered meal every day, many older adults would simply go without food.

⁵ Kastenbaum, Steve. *Medicaid cuts jeopardize care for millions who rely on New York’s safety net hospitals.* City & State NY. July 2025. Accessed at: <https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2025/07/medicaid-cuts-jeopardize-care-millions-who-rely-new-yorks-safety-net-hospitals/406591/>

⁶ Romm, Tony. *White House Eyes Overhaul of Federal Housing Aid to the Poor.* The New York Times. April 2025. Accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/17/us/politics/housing-aid-hud-federal-budget.html>

⁷ Frazin, Rachel. *Trump administration eyes elimination of program that helps low-income people heat and cool their homes.* The Hill. April 2025. Accessed at: [Trump administration eyes elimination of program that helps low-income people heat and cool their homes](https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/1234567-trump-administration-eyes-elimination-of-program-that-helps-low-income-people-heat-and-cool-their-homes/)

But the solution is clear too: improving existing programs like home-delivered and congregate meals, investing in innovative new programs, and making pantries and online resources more accessible so we can get more food to people in their homes.

Expanding Elder Nutrition Programs

Expanding the City's home-delivered meal program to weekends would be a significant step in the fight to end elder hunger. Every New Yorker deserves to have access to a healthy meal 365 days a year. Our recent study found overwhelming satisfaction in home-delivered meal programs, with 87% saying that home-delivered meals help them remain in their own homes. A large majority (71%) expressed an interest in at least one meal delivered to their home on weekends. Our study also revealed 73% of participants have never used a food pantry pick-up program and 92.8% never used mobile pantry or grocery delivery program. Participation was low even among individuals with an income of less than \$15,000 annually. Yet, these older New Yorkers are also unable to afford to order groceries online or have groceries or restaurant meals delivered to them. Given that nearly half of those surveyed did not have family or friends who could help them regularly with meals, it's clear that weekend meals are a lifeline for the older adults who can't make it to a grocery store or food pantry, or don't have the ability to prepare meals from scratch.

An expansion of this program would also provide older New Yorkers with much-needed security in the face of federal cuts to essential programs. With changes to SNAP regulations and significant cuts to the program, older adults in New York will be left with fewer resources to access food in the coming years. The City must act to make its program whole by providing home-delivered meals recipients with at least one meal a day, seven days a week. **We support the passage of Intro. 770 with adequate funding to ensure that providers are not burdened with an unfunded mandate to provide additional services.**

Ending elder hunger in New York City will take more than just providing more food to older adults through existing programs. We must also act to offer nutrition in more ways so that they can have greater freedom in the way they access these programs. While the social benefits of

congregate dining cannot be denied, Grab-and-Go meals allow providers to meet the nutritional needs of older adults in a person-centered way. Grab-and-go meals offer flexibility for someone who has a caregiver who can pick up a meal for them. Furthermore, older adults' needs and abilities often shift depending on a variety of factors. An older adult may feel able to make the trip to an OAC one day but not at the time that congregate meals are offered or have the energy to stay for meal service. Grab-and-go meals can offer a new entry point for potentially new participants who may be reluctant to participate in congregate dining; this entry point can be leveraged connect them with additional resources they may need. Providers are also more able to shift on a dime should there be an emergency at their congregate meal site, leveraging funding to shift to take-out options. Focus groups from our recent study also shared a desire for increased choices at congregate sites, home-delivered meals, and food pantries.

Older adults should be allowed to choose where, when, and how they eat their meals and any program that offers expanded choices and autonomy for participants will provide the dignity older New Yorkers so deeply deserve. The Administration for Community Living agrees: in the 2023 Older Americans Act Regulatory update, ACL clarified that up to 25% of Title III-C1 funds can be spent on grab-and-go meals after all transfers and that Title III-C1 funds may be transferred to Title III-C2 programs to provide grab-and-go meals.⁸ The New York State Office for the Aging has also supported the funding of grab-and-go meals in their 2023-2027 State Plan on Aging.⁹ Finally, viewing this program as part of a comprehensive anti-hunger strategy, an older adult's ability to eat that day should not depend on their ability or desire to eat in a congregate setting. **Therefore, we support the passage of Intro. 0237 to establish a grab-and-go meal option for older adults.**

Improving access to nutrition is not just about changes and updates to food programs. Increasingly, information about nutritional support is found online and new services such as grocery delivery can help alleviate the difficulties homebound older adults have in accessing

⁸ 89 FR 11656, Feb. 14, 2024. Part 1321. Accessed at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/subchapter-C/part-1321>

⁹ New York State Office for the Aging. July 2023. *2023-2027 New York State Plan on Aging*. 19. Accessed at: https://aging.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/09/2023-2027-new-york-state-plan-on-aging_final.pdf

fresh groceries. However, the technological barriers that older adults experience in accessing the internet remain. Of the primary concerns for the older adults in our recent study, using technology was a moderate or major problem for 37%. Nearly a quarter of all respondents reported not having access to the internet in any capacity while approximately 20% reported preferring not to use the internet and choosing to use it as little as possible. This limits access to a variety of opportunities for lower cost food or special programs for nearly half of those we surveyed. Participants in our focus groups also cited difficulties in learning about what services were available to them. The majority relied on word of mouth and accidental discovery of opportunities, and many expressed a desire for clarity of services available. Helping older adults access this information online can alleviate this gap, providing older adults with another source for information. **Citymeals strongly supports new programs that offer increased assistance in accessing the internet and other technologies, including the program proposed in Intro. 0238, especially as this kind of support can help homebound older adults access services like online grocery ordering.**

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony and are grateful to the bill sponsors for their work to address elder hunger in our city.



**Testimony of Rich Baum, President and CEO of Educational Alliance
Before the New York City Council Committee on Aging
Oversight: NYC Aging Meal Programming
Hon. Crystal Hudson, Chair
September 22, 2025 at 1 p.m.**

Thank you, Chair Hudson and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify today.

For more than 135 years, Educational Alliance has brought together and partnered with diverse communities in Lower Manhattan, offering individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

Educational Alliance's Older Adult Services (OAS) are supported by contracts with New York City Aging, which help fund programs in three centers for older adults: the Sirovich Center for Balanced Living, the Weinberg Center for Balanced Living, and the Co-op Village Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC). This funding supports our Older Adults Services to collectively provide 3,372 older New Yorkers with educational, recreational, nutritional programs and case assistance and referrals.

Over the course of our current contract, we have seen participation in our meal programs steadily increase. For example, in FY25 our Weinberg Center was contracted to serve 15,000 breakfasts and 35,000 lunches throughout the course of the year. In actuality, we served over 22,000 breakfasts and over 38,000 lunches, an increase over the contracted amount of 148% and 110% respectively. Likewise, our Sirovich Center is seeing a steady increase in meal attendance – over the past 12 months Sirovich has served 10,000 more meals than in the previous 12-month period.

Educational Alliance does everything we can to serve all older adults who come to us for meals. Unfortunately, increasingly we must turn some people away due to capacity limits. As an organization, we cover the cost of all the meals we serve above the number we are contracted to serve. This is becoming a significant and growing burden for us.

Given budgetary constraints, we were extremely alarmed to learn that the NYC Aging RFP is delayed. This is a significant burden for providers like us who are already struggling to keep our budgets balanced with steep inflationary increases in food costs. Additionally, we are serving meals to more individuals, and our contracted rates are woefully insufficient to meet the demand. At the same time, we are concerned that federal cuts to SNAP benefits will drive more food insecurity among older adults, and may result in more individuals who depend on meals from older adult centers like ours.

We urge NYC Aging to provide a supplemental advance for older adult centers to help off-set the high costs of meal provision until a new RFP can be issued. We never want to send

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someone away hungry from our program, but we also cannot afford the increasingly high cost of subsidizing each meal.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit feedback.



***Testimony before the New York City Council
- Committee on Aging -***

September 22, 2025

Marcus Jackson

*Manager of Advocacy, Community, and Government Relations
Encore Community Services*

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the Committee.

My name is Marcus Jackson, and I am the Manager of Advocacy, Community, and Government Relations at Encore Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Encore has been serving older New Yorkers for nearly fifty years. Every day, we deliver meals, provide case management, and create spaces for connection, helping thousands of older adults age with dignity.

We strongly support the intent of Intro 770 to ensure that every older adult who needs it receives a home-delivered meal seven days a week, year-round.

But we must be clear: providers cannot do this work without full City funding at the current reimbursement rate. Today, Encore delivers weekday meals funded by DFTA, while weekend meals are provided through a community partnership that doesn't cover our costs. That creates deficits for providers.

At Encore alone, covering two additional weekend meals per week at the DFTA reimbursement rate would require about \$1.84 million per year. Citywide, we estimate that number is roughly \$34 million. Without this investment, mandating seven-day delivery would strain providers, divert scarce private dollars, and ultimately shortchange older adults.

So we urge the Council to do two things:

1. Ensure that Intro 770 explicitly requires full DFTA funding for seven meals per week, at the full reimbursement rate.
2. Work with providers and community partners to implement this expansion in a way that strengthens the aging services system.

A fully funded seven-day service would mean better nutrition, greater stability, and more social connection for tens of thousands of homebound older adults. That's the vision we share with you, and we look forward to working together to make it real.

Thank you for your leadership on aging, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Testimony of
The Legal Aid Society

on

Oversight: NYC Department for the Aging Meal Programming; Int 0237-2024; Int
0238-2024; Int 0725-2024; Int 0770-2024
presented before

The New York City Council's Committees on Aging

Jeannine Cahill-Jackson
Director of Elder Law
Civil Practice
The Legal Aid Society

September 22, 2025

The Legal Aid Society appreciates the opportunity to comment on the subject of the NYC Department for the Aging Meal Programming, Int 0237-2024; Int 0238-2024; Int 0725-2024; Int 0770-2024 and thanks the Committee on Aging for convening this hearing.

Who We Are

The Legal Aid Society (LAS), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, was founded in 1876 to provide free legal representation to marginalized New York City families and individuals. The Legal Aid Society's legal program operates three major practices – Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights – and through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. With a caseload of nearly 200,00 cases and legal matters for clients, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States.

Our Civil Practice works to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers by helping vulnerable families and individuals to obtain and maintain the necessities of life- housing, health care, food, and self-sufficiency. We serve as a “one-stop” legal resource for clients with a broad variety of legal problems, ranging, among others, from government benefits and access to health care, to immigration and domestic violence. Our depth and breadth of experience is unmatched in the legal profession and gives LAS a unique capacity to go beyond any one individual case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals, and broader, more powerful systemic change at a societal level. Our work has always taken an explicit racial and social equity lens, and the current housing crisis has further focused our efforts to advocate for the needs of New York's marginalized communities.

The Legal Aid Society has a long history of providing eviction defense services to seniors in the Bronx and Brooklyn. In 2023, the Legal Aid Society created a city-wide Elder Law Unit (ELU), combining the Brooklyn Office for the Aging and the Bronx Assigned Counsel Project. Currently, the ELU is comprised of a multi-disciplinary team specializing in eviction defense for seniors in the Bronx and Brooklyn. By specializing in eviction defense for seniors, the ELU recognizes that the preservation of housing for a senior often involves many intersecting medical, financial and social issues. The ELU seeks to assess and address the needs of our senior clients to not only prevent their eviction but to alleviate the underlying causes that lead them to be at risk of eviction.

Support for Proposed Legislation: Int 0237-2024

The Legal Aid Society supports Int. 0237-2024, which would require the Department for the Aging to establish a daily grab-and-go meal program at Older Adult Centers. Providing older adults with the option of grab-and-go meals is an affordable option for older adults that have a limited income but may not qualify for meal delivery. It can enable older adults to still be able to get their meal if they are not able to stay at the center due to a doctor's or other appointment, health concerns about eating in a congregate setting or any other reason life may present that they could benefit from a quick meal option. Additionally, we recommend that the Older Adult Centers make the grab-and-go meals available both before and after lunchtime which would enable more older adults to access the food they need while also making it to the appointments and other things that they may need to attend to.

Support for Proposed Legislation: Int 0238-2024

The Legal Aid Society supports Int. 0238-2024, which would require the Department for the Aging and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications to develop a technical support program to serve older adults. Older adults face barriers to accessing many essential services in a convenient manner (ie telehealth) as well as to communicating with others due to lack of understanding of how to use technology. Classes helping older adults to gain skills using their phones, tablets and computers would be very beneficial for helping close this technological gap. The Legal Aid Society also has several suggestions to make this access to technology even more meaningful. First, the reality is that low-income older adults rarely have computers or tablets at home. In order to provide not only the knowledge of how to use a computer but also the ability to use that knowledge, Older Adult Centers should have computers and tablets available for older adults to use and even perhaps to borrow and bring home (similar to a library system). Second, older adults should be able to schedule technical assistance appointments with a technical support person so that they can help them complete time sensitive tasks such as submitting a benefit recertification or application online. Third, the older adult centers should provide private spaces for older adults to use the technology to attend telehealth appointments with their doctors or even virtual appointments with their attorneys or other service providers.

Support for Proposed Legislation: Int 0725-2024

The Legal Aid Society supports Int. 0725-2024, which would require the Department for the Aging to report on senior and accessible dwelling units. The Legal Aid Society recommends that this report also include documentation of how many disabled older adults are currently living in a NON accessible apartment. There should be further reporting as to what

accommodation the older adult would need and if this accommodation could possibly be made to their current unit or not. For example, it may not be feasible to install an elevator in a 5 flight walk up building for one tenant. However, the widening of a doorway to accommodate a wheelchair in a unit may be. This would only be a first step to helping these older adults be able to get the accommodation they need to be able to continue to live in their homes. We recommend that this data could be used to develop a future program to help older adult request and obtain these accommodations or move to accessible units.

Support for Proposed Legislation: Int 0770-2024

The Legal Aid Society supports Int. 0770-2024, which would require the Department for the Aging funded meal programs to provide home-delivered meals each day of the calendar year. This is an extremely important bill to ensure access to food for homebound older adults. Most older adults that require meals delivered during the week also do not have access to prepared food on the weekends. Accordingly, this is a crucial expansion of the meal program. Additionally, the Legal Aid Society proposes that there be an option created for older adults to elect to receive up to 3 prepared meals per day, so they are able to have proper nutrition required for an adult. We further propose that a grocery delivery program be developed for homebound older adults to be able to use their SNAP benefits to buy groceries and have them delivered further increasing the access to nutrition. There is currently a small pilot program for grocery delivery run by City Meals called Mobile Grocery. There is also a program administered by NYC Health and Hospitals through NYC Care however this program only applies to those without health insurance. Accordingly, there is an enormous unmet need for additional meal delivery and grocery delivery.

Conclusion

Thank you for reviewing our testimony and for the opportunity to comment.

For more information, please contact Jeannine Cahill-Jackson at jcahilljackson@legal-aid.org, or at 646-856-0189



LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

**Testimony at the Committee on Aging
Monday, September 22nd, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, esteemed members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Justine Tetteh, and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House was originally founded in 1894 as a free kindergarten for immigrants and is among the oldest settlement houses in the nation. At its core, the work has not changed since our founding – we still, educate children, feed hungry neighbors, care for the elderly, advocate for vulnerable individuals, and provide critical, comprehensive services to immigrants and low-income New Yorkers, helping them to gain the skills they need to strengthen themselves today and build a better community for tomorrow.

Older adults across New York City face significant challenges in securing food, keeping pace with rapid technological change, and staying socially connected. At Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, we are committed to addressing these challenges with both direct services and advocacy. Two impactful approaches are our grab-and-go meal program which is part of our Networked Older Adult Centers, and our Adult Education program which offers free technology education services for Older Adults.

Grab-and-go meal programs are essential for addressing food insecurity with dignity and flexibility. While our Older Adult Centers are contracted to provide both congregate and grab-and-go meals, we also like OACs across the city provide socialization, health and wellness opportunities, along with critical social services, not all Older Adults can always attend in person and on-site congregate meals. Many have medical appointments, caregiving responsibilities, or mobility challenges. Grab-and-go options ensure they do not have to choose between attending to daily needs and eating a nutritious meal. While some Older Adults rely on Meals on Wheels Monday through Friday, the schedule does not accommodate for the daily need for nutritious food for homebound seniors. This simple innovation has revolutionized our ability to keep older adults nourished while respecting their independence and the privilege of choice in how to access essential food services.

Technology education is equally vital and must keep pace with the current and rapidly changing technology environment. From navigating phone updates and using the internet to managing government benefits and connecting with loved ones, digital literacy is now a necessity. Our technology program empowers older adults to maintain independence, strengthen civic engagement, and stay connected to their families and communities. Some of the courses the Neighborhood House offers includes Using Apple Maps, Google Toolbox, Basic and Advanced Computing, and Introduction to Coding. These courses reduce isolation and promote equity by ensuring older adults are not left behind in a rapidly changing world.

Together, grab-and-go meals and technology education highlight what investment in older



LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

adults can achieve:

- Promotion of lifelong learning
- Increased independence and autonomy
- Strengthened civic engagement
- Reduced social isolation
- Greater equity and wellness

Investing in these programs is investing in stronger families, more resilient communities, and a more inclusive New York City. Yet with looming federal grant cuts, nonprofit organizations like ours cannot sustain this work alone. We need strong partnership and support from the city to ensure that older New Yorkers have reliable access to food, education, and the resources they need to age with dignity. Lenox Hill Neighborhood House aims to continue offering free education opportunities for older adults and strengthen *The Teaching Kitchen* and NYC Aging's partnership to teach government-funded programs healthy, low waste, and low-cost meals for all New Yorkers, especially our older New Yorkers. As our city continues to lead with a vision for the "power of aging," I urge you to expand support for grab-and-go programs and free adult education so that every older adult has the tools, nourishment, and community they deserve.

Thank you for your time and for your ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of older New Yorkers.



**MET
COUNCIL**

Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.
Changing lives.

New York City Council Oversight Hearing of the Committee on Aging on the NYC Department for the Aging Meal Programming

Chair Hudson and fellow members of the New York City Council Committee on Aging.

Thank you for holding this oversight hearing on the Department for the Aging's Meal Programming. For over 50 years, the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) has been America's largest Jewish charity dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments, ranging from 100% affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program, comprehensive Holocaust survivor assistance, senior programming, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher and halal emergency food network. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually, including some of New York's most vulnerable older adults.

As New York City's older adult population continues to grow, the already vulnerable group continues to face unique challenges that require inventive solutions. Older adults often live on fixed incomes with limited ability to work. This can limit their capacity to respond to financial shifts or emergencies. This leads many older adults, 3,000 of which are Met Council clients, to rely on our services like Elder Abuse Prevention Program, Caregiver Support Program, Holocaust Survivor Program, and Senior Repair program.

Food insecurity is a constant and growing concern among the older adult population in New York City. Along with limited incomes, many older adults are not physically able to consistently prepare meals that adequately meet their nutritional needs. Met Council supports **Int. 237**, which would establish a grab-and-go meal program at older adult centers throughout the city. This program would be convenient for participants and help to ensure they can feel confident in where their next meal is coming from. A program like this would be particularly helpful in a time when EBT card fraud is rampant, particularly against older adults, and those stolen benefits are no longer being reimbursed. A grab and go meal program in Older Adult Centers would act as a stop gap for many New Yorkers who might otherwise go hungry.

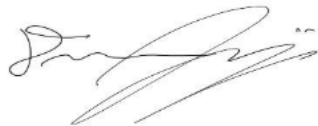
In a world driven by technology, older adults can be left behind without access to the resources that require interfacing with apps and online forms. With this consideration, Met Council strongly supports **Int. 238** that would create a technical support program to serve older adults. Met Council's Geriatrics Team regularly serves clients who would benefit from technical support, whether it is help with their smartphones, electronic signatures, accessing medical care, or other online resources. For example, we operate an online ordering platform, Market by Met Council, which is used by a portion of our pantry network. While many of our older adult clients initially require assistance navigating the system, with the right support, it offers a significantly more streamlined and dignified way to access food assistance. This technical assistance will be particularly relevant in the near future with increased age requirements for work mandates for Medicaid and SNAP that will require older adults between the ages of 60-64 to work to remain eligible for benefits. These new requirements underscore the importance of technical knowledge and how technology support can offer a path forward. Furthermore,

greater access to and understanding of technology may alleviate some older adult's reliance on family and caregivers to meet these needs. As a result, this program has the potential to lower the risk of elder abuse.

As New York's largest provider of kosher and halal food assistance, at Met Council we pride ourselves on our ability to provide high-quality food assistance that meets the needs of our Jewish and Muslim neighbors throughout the city. It is because of this commitment that we want to express both our support for and concern for **Int. 770**. Home delivered meals programs are vital for homebound New Yorkers throughout the city and we certainly support the expansion of these programs to provide more meals and adequate reimbursement for providers. However, as it is written, Int. 770 includes vague language that seemingly would require that DFTA contracted home-delivered meal providers provide a meal seven days a week and 365 days a year. While we do not believe that is the actual intent of the legislation, this could potentially create an unmanageable burden, particularly for organizations observing Shabbat Saturdays or the Sabbath on Sundays. A possible solution would be to require that seven meals worth of food is delivered and allow for multiple meals to be delivered before weekends or holidays. There are several possible ways to make this important change more accessible to a variety of organizations and participating New Yorkers, but it is essential that the language must be clear and intentionally designed to meet the diverse needs of New Yorkers.

We thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the City Council to better meet the needs of all New Yorkers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dickran Jebejian", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dickran Jebejian
Director of Policy
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

To: Members of the New York City Council Aging Committee

From: Coleton Whitaker, Director, Program Experience, Cwhitaker@OATS.org

Date: Monday, September 22, 2025

Subject: Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Aging Regarding Int. 238 on behalf of Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP

Dear Chair Hudson and members of the NYC Council Aging Committee;

Thank you for holding this important hearing today and for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of OATS from AARP in support of [Int. 238](#).

OATS is the creator of Senior Planet, the leading national program empowering people 60 and older to thrive in the digital age. Since opening the first of its kind technology center in Manhattan in 2013, we have been at the forefront of providing older New Yorkers with a vibrant community space to learn technology, build connections, and enhance their lives – delivering more than 30,000 program experiences each year in diverse languages like Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Russian and others. Now, with an investment of over \$2.5 million, we are relaunching a state-of-the-art Senior Planet center set to open in early 2026—establishing a new hub for innovation, programming, and long-term support that underscores our deep and ongoing commitment to New York City’s older adults.

Additionally, OATS is proud to partner with NYC Aging through the Connected Communities initiative, bringing digital literacy programs to older adults across all five boroughs. As the City’s lead agency for older adult services, DFTA has been an essential partner, and we look forward to increased funding and strengthening of this collaboration through priorities such as [Int. 238](#).

As prioritized in Int. 238, OATS firmly believes that expanded technical support programs for older adults in New York are extremely important. A recent report our organization released found strong evidence that technology interventions from expert digital navigators can play a significant role in driving behavioral social change for older adults: helping them combat social isolation, and loneliness, all while improving quality of life.

To put into perspective, despite our growing reliance on technology, we know that millions of older Americans remain on the wrong side of the digital divide. At OATS, we’re on a mission to change that by working to empower older adults with the skills needed to harness the power of today’s technology. Being online not only connects you to the world, it has the ability to connect older adults with answers to questions, solutions to needs, and tools to thrive while aging.

Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP

236 West 30th Street, Floor 8, New York, NY 10001 | **T** (718) 360-1707 | www.oats.org

New York City's greatest strength lies in the diversity and resilience of its people. Among them is our community of older adults, who should have every opportunity to flourish and share in the benefits of today's innovations and digital resources.

We applaud Chair Hudson and the Committee's commitment to supporting older New Yorkers, as evidenced by the Age in Place 2.0 legislative package. This thoughtful initiative will help ensure that older New Yorkers can continue to thrive in their communities as they age. At OATS, we are proud to stand alongside leaders who prioritize building and expanding technology skills among older adults and working to create a more inclusive, age-friendly city for all.



TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK
New York City Council Committee on Aging
Honorable Crystal Hudson, Chair

Oversight: NYC Department for the Aging Meal Programming
Submitted by:
Abbie Rubin-Pope
September 22, 2025

On behalf of UJA-Federation of New York, our network of nonprofit partners and those we serve, thank you, Chairperson Hudson and members of the Aging Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of supporting New York City's older adults. I am Abbie Rubin-Pope, Policy and Advocacy Associate at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. UJA's mission is to fight poverty; connect people to their communities and respond to crises both locally and around the world. UJA supports nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are the most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

Over the last two decades, New York City has experienced significant growth in its older adult population, which has increased by 50%, or approximately 500,000 individuals. Currently, more than 21% of this demographic live below the poverty line.¹ With the rising cost of food and other necessities, many older adults with limited financial resources struggle to afford groceries and nutritious meals.

Federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and health programs, like Medicaid leave older New Yorkers in an especially vulnerable position. These same changes in federal spending also imperil food pantries, which are already straining under increased community needs. For these reasons, it is especially important to ensure the legislation outlined below is executed and enforced in ways consistent with the need and abilities of older New Yorkers.

Int 0237-2024 (Hudson): A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to establishing a grab-and-go meal program at older adult centers

UJA supports Int 0237, which is a vital step toward ensuring that New York City's older adults can access nutritious meals in ways that respect their health, mobility, and cultural needs. By establishing a grab-and-go meal program at older adult centers, this legislation recognizes the

¹ <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/press/pdf/report-22-2025.pdf>



realities faced by many seniors who cannot remain onsite due to caregiving responsibilities, physical limitations, or personal preferences. These meal options are not only a practical option to complement congregate dining, but also a dignified solution that empowers older adults to maintain independence while still benefiting from city-supported nutrition services. As food insecurity rises and federal support programs face cuts, Int 0237 offers a flexible and urgently needed response to the increasing needs of the older adult population.

By providing this alternative, the grab-and-go meal program not only complements traditional dining options but also offers a dignified and empowering solution. It allows older adults to maintain their independence while continuing to benefit from city-supported nutrition services. This flexibility is especially urgent as food insecurity among older adults increases and federal support programs, such as SNAP, face funding cuts. Int 0237 addresses these growing needs by offering a practical and adaptable approach to meal access for seniors.

Recent observations from several older adult center providers indicate a substantial increase in the number of seniors attending centers for lunch, with one provider reporting a 125% rise compared to the previous year. This trend highlights the expanding reliance on meal programs within the older adult community. To respond to this trend, UJA urges the Council to support additional City funding for OAC congregate (and grab and go) meals. As many older adults face the loss of some or all of their SNAP benefits, it is expected that even more will turn to OAC meal programs to meet their nutritional needs.

Int 0770-2024 (Lee): A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring home-delivered meals be delivered each day of the calendar year

Int 0770 represents a crucial step toward ensuring that New York City's homebound older adults have consistent access to nutritious meals every day of the year. This legislation addresses a significant gap in service by requiring meal deliveries on weekends and holidays—times when food insecurity can be especially pronounced among vulnerable seniors. By guaranteeing daily meal delivery, the bill not only supports the physical health and wellbeing of older adults but also upholds their dignity. Furthermore, the daily visits by meal delivery staff serve as an essential point of human contact, which can help to reduce social isolation and enable early intervention if any concerns arise.

While this measure is essential, we respectfully urge the bill's sponsor to amend the legislation to accommodate religious observances. Many of UJA's nonprofit partners who participate in the Home-Delivered Meals (HDM) program observe Shabbat and are therefore unable to deliver meals from Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown. The bill, as currently written, does not



clarify whether daily delivery is required or if it would be permissible for providers to deliver weekend meals in advance. It is important that the legislation explicitly allows for flexibility in delivery schedules to respect religious practices while still ensuring that older adults do not go without meals.

With appropriate adjustments to accommodate religious observance and ensure sufficient funding, Int 0770 has the potential to deliver equitable and reliable nutrition to New York City's homebound older adults, supporting both their health and quality of life.

Anticipated Procurement

UJA anticipates that the NYC Department for the Aging may release up to four Requests for Proposals (RFPs) before the end of the current calendar year. Given the possibility of changes in city leadership, including a potential new Mayor and Administration, as well as the significant fiscal challenges currently imposed by the federal government, we strongly recommend adopting a more deliberate timeline for any forthcoming procurement processes. It is advisable for the city to delay the release of new procurements until the full budgetary impact of the federal cuts is clearly understood and assessed. This approach will help ensure that decisions regarding funding and program implementation are made with a complete understanding of the City's financial landscape and the needs of its older adult population.

CONCLUSION

UJA-Federation of New York is grateful to the Council for its focus on the needs of older adults and the aging services sector. Please reach out to rubin-poea@ujafedny.org with any questions.



**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council**

**Committee on Aging Oversight - NYC Department for the Aging Meal Programming
Council Member Crystal Hudson, Chair**

**Submitted by Anita Kwok, Policy Analyst
September 22, 2025**

Thank you for convening today's Oversight hearing on NYC Aging's meal programming. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach over 800,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

UNH members provide a wide variety of services to over 80,000 older New Yorkers each year by operating programs such as older adult centers (OACs), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), home delivered meal (HDM) programs, Geriatric Mental Health, case management programs, and others, often funded and contracted by NYC Aging and the City Council. UNH and its settlement house members employ the philosophy that older adults are valued members of our neighborhoods, whose wisdom and experience are important to the fabric of our communities.

Settlement houses indicate that food insecurity is one of the top community concerns in 2025, and that those needs are growing rapidly. Similarly, hunger emerged as a top community need at settlement houses during the pandemic, and during the recent wave of asylum seekers in New York City. Today, demand for emergency food remains at higher levels than ever before, with many New Yorkers who are grappling with meeting their basic needs. At the same time, federal funding threats and cuts to programs like SNAP and FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program are leaving settlement houses without the necessary tools to respond, while placing greater strain on other emergency food programs. Settlement houses address hunger through benefits enrollment, pantry services, community outreach, and referrals, along with offering meals for older adults at OACs and through HDM programs. Unfortunately, resources and government support have not kept up with the exorbitant level of need. Food is a basic human

right and our City leaders must act swiftly to ensure all New Yorkers have consistent, equitable access to nutritious food.

Federal Funding Threats

With New Yorkers already facing record levels of food insecurity, federal funding cuts are eliminating essential social safety nets that families, children, and especially seniors, depend on to survive. FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program funding has not resumed since the January funding freeze, which significantly reduces community-based organizations' ability to provide food assistance and eviction prevention services. This loss comes at a time of growing need. In March, one settlement house food pantry received 90 new registrations, above the 520 community members they typically serve. Without FEMA funding, that organization has been forced to reduce their food pantry days and pause their tenant rental assistance program, which is sometimes required by the city in order to receive a larger rental assistance grant to prevent eviction. These cuts leave families at risk of eviction, homelessness, and hunger.

Settlement house programs and participants will suffer greatly when SNAP is cut. Of 1.8 million SNAP recipients in New York City, one-third are children and another third are seniors. Thousands of individuals will lose SNAP eligibility due to changing eligibility rules related to their immigration status, and hundreds of thousands of people across the State are expected to be impacted by stricter restrictions around work requirements to access SNAP. While the full impact of SNAP cuts is still not fully known, NYC Department of Social Services Commissioner Molly Wasow Park has estimated that SNAP cuts would cost the City \$900 million. Hunger Free America, a food justice advocacy organization, asserts that if anything close to this magnitude of cuts is actually implemented, it would lead to the greatest hunger and food insecurity crisis since the Great Depression.

Settlement houses and other community-based organizations were already struggling to meet the growing need for food, health care, and housing assistance. A 2023 survey of more than 1,000 settlement house families within the UNH network found that nearly one in four respondents reported that they were "sometimes unable to afford food for their children," with an additional 10 percent reporting they were "often" or "always" unable to do so. These federal cuts and threats don't just affect programs—they harm the children, seniors, and families who rely on them. The City must take action to protect residents by ensuring our local food and rental assistance programs remain fully funded, accessible, and able to meet growing needs.

These cuts from the federal government threaten the health and stability of New Yorkers. Food insecurity goes deeper than hunger: it is linked to higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, anxiety, and depression — all of which older adults are particularly vulnerable to and lack resources to mitigate. Without stable meal programs, they risk declining health, isolation, and loss of independence. Older adults have high rates of late-onset mental health conditions, yet low rates of assessment and treatment, according to the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH).¹

At the same time, not only are food pantries already over capacity, but they cannot be a replacement for SNAP. Settlement houses warn that we will see longer lines at food distribution

¹ [Fiscal 2025 Mayor's Management Report - Department for the Aging](#)

sites, more older adults requesting meals at OACs, and an even bigger strain on staff at community-based organizations.

We Need New York City Leaders to Continue to Speak Out For New Yorkers and Support Trusted Community Organizations

Federal funding cuts attack New Yorkers and reveal the administration's rejection of policies and programs that support the most vulnerable. Community-based organizations are experiencing the daily impact of cuts and funding freezes to Head Start, food and housing assistance, and other federal programs, and have a deep understanding of the risks to New York City residents. Given the level of retribution we have seen from this administration, settlement houses are concerned that they will be retaliated against if they speak out, putting their communities at even greater risk. UNH needs you to speak out, share these stories, and urge federal lawmakers to oppose these funding cuts.

We urge City leaders to support their community-based organizations that provide housing, food, education, child care, and services for older adults. Settlement houses are places that people go during a crisis. To continue to protect our communities and our neighbors, we must protect the institutions New Yorkers count on. Reliable, flexible funding for settlement houses and other CBOs will go far to ensure that communities have access to comprehensive, holistic supports and wraparound services that they need in order to thrive.

It's critical that the City Council use the tools at its disposal to help protect older New Yorkers and directly address food insecurity amongst older adults. These measures not only fight hunger, but also strengthen nutrition security and help older New Yorkers stay healthy, independent, and connected to their communities.

Congregate Meals

Older adult centers (OACs) are crucial supports for older New Yorkers, offering both in-person and virtual activities, congregate meals, and other essential supports. Settlement houses in UNH's network operate 42 standalone OACs and two network OACs, serving tens of thousands of older adults in these centers.

Rising inflation rates have affected senior meals programs, especially food costs for congregate meals. There has not been an increase to the congregate meals budget in years, since at least the last RFP in 2021 which predated a period of abnormally high inflation. Food costs have reached record highs, placing an immense strain on an already chronically underfunded meal program. And this year, despite eggs being a cost-effective source of protein, the food staple has been experiencing shortages and record high costs that are not expected to go down any time soon. Rising food costs have made it increasingly difficult for providers to provide culturally-competent and nutritious meals.

At the same time, federal cuts to SNAP will likely drive more older New Yorkers to older adult centers to utilize their meal programming. This will place an even greater strain on meal programs at Older Adult Centers across the City, most of which are already stretched thin and lack the resources to accommodate the growing number of participants. The time is now to plan for expanded units at OACs and ensure additional funding to support expected growth in food needs, including ensuring that culturally competent, nutritious meals remain consistently

available.

The City must ensure inflation costs are included annually in future budgets for congregate meals at OACs. We reiterate our call from the FY26 budget cycle for the City to **increase food budgets at older adult centers with a \$57 million investment in FY27 to meet inflation demands for congregate meal services**. This \$57 million figure is consistent with an analysis of the on-the-ground needs from UNH and our advocacy partners. **We also urge contract flexibility and additional funding to meet the expected growing demand for congregate meals in light of federal SNAP cuts**. Food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced.

Grab-And-Go Meals and Intro 237

Grab and go meals were a tremendous innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic, initially serving as an interim solution before the Get Food program was set up and later serving as an option for older adults who were ready to go outside but not to spend time eating indoors in a crowd. We were disappointed to hear NYC Aging ended the grab and go option in 2022, unless providers included grab and go meals in their most recent OAC contracts. Since then, many centers continue to report that grab and go remains a popular option, with some older adults still hesitant to be unmasked and eating congregate meals indoors. Providers report that older adults are still concerned about COVID and this is affecting their utilization numbers for congregate meals. At the same time, food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced. The City must ensure grab and go meals continue to be a viable option at all older adult centers that offer them – and not only those that had the foresight to include grab and go in their contracts.

UNH members are interested in this bill and agree there is a need for grab-and-go meals, but at the same time have concerns about implementation. One of our members reported NYC Aging being inconsistent with telling some providers that they could budget for grab-and-go meals and other providers that they couldn't. Another UNH member similarly indicated strong interest, but would need another staff person. Several of our members note that older adults sometimes will go around to various older adult centers looking for grab-and-go meals or an additional lunch to pack up because of how high food insecurity is among older adults.

We continue to support Intro 237 by Council Member Hudson to allow all OACs to provide grab and go meals if they want to, which would help alleviate food insecurity while providing flexible options for older adults who do not feel comfortable eating in public due to public health concerns.

Home Delivered Meals and Intro 770

Nonprofit home delivered meals (HDM) providers deliver a daily nutritious meal to homebound older adults who are unable to prepare their own food, while also providing case management and regular in-person wellness checks for those at risk of social isolation. Eight UNH members currently provide home delivered meals in their communities, either as lead contractors or subcontractors. The HDM program recently underwent a new procurement that began last fall. Several private vendors were selected to carry out this work for the first time instead of nonprofits, and we are monitoring the impact of this change and whether meal reimbursement rates are appropriate. We deeply appreciate the Council's support over the last few years in

securing funding for a higher reimbursement rate for the HDM program. Since 2021, the per-meal reimbursement rate has increased from \$9.58 to \$14.78 per meal. This is a significant and essential improvement.

Older adult hunger is at a crisis level. For many homebound older adults, the HDM program is the only food they are receiving for all of their nutritional needs, and they will stretch the meal to last all day. We need to look toward expanding this system and providing more meals to those who need them. We continue to call for a **\$27 million investment to operationalize Council Member Lee's Intro 770, which requires the City to pay for meals 7 days a week.** Currently, weekend and holiday home-delivered meals are provided through a public-private partnership with Citymeals on Wheels. Intro 770 shifts the responsibility from Citymeals on Wheels to regular NYC Aging home-delivered meal contracts, allowing Citymeals to provide additional meals per day. Expanding home delivered meals is critical to addressing food insecurity among older adults and ensuring homebound seniors receive nutritious meals.'

Procurements

Today's hearing was initially framed around NYC Aging requests for proposals (RFPs), though the oversight topic was changed to food insecurity. In the last week or so, new information has arisen about the intention of NYC Aging to conduct several procurements in the next three months. A new procurement for the Caregiver Program has been anticipated for some time. Most recently, NYC Aging has shared in meetings with providers that they intend to release concept papers in advance of a procurement for Older Adult Centers, NORCs, and Transportation contracts by around November 2025, with an intention to issue RFPs for these programs in December 2025, so that new awards could start on July 1, 2026. Although these contracts are beginning to approach the end of their three-year term, NYC Aging has the option to renew these contracts, which they have typically exercised in the past.

While procurements serve an important function in New York City to ensure programs offer competitive services that best reflect changing communities, the bundling of these four RFPs in such a compressed timeline runs the risk of creating programs that do not truly reflect community needs. The Concept Paper process is an important opportunity for older adults, providers, advocates, and other stakeholders to share input into potential program design, and for the City agency to refine its procurement based on that feedback. For example, during the last OAC RFP process, the idea for Network OACs was born from community feedback about the need for organizations with multiple centers to better coordinate their services and programming. This idea was only able to come to fruition because the concept paper allowed time for providers to consider carefully their service offerings, the needs of their clients, and their organizational abilities, and then share formal, thoughtful feedback. It is essential not to rush this process for programming that makes up the core of New York City's community-based programming for older adults.

In addition, completing RFPs are time- and labor-intensive for nonprofits, and our members have expressed deep concerns around having to complete multiple procurements at the same time (note that the Department of Youth and Community Development are close to releasing a RFP for COMPASS afterschool services, and has several others pending). For settlement houses who also run programs under contract with other City agencies, there are additional procurements planned in the coming months, placing even more stress on development staff.

We urge NYC Aging to reconsider the timeline to reprocore these four programs and exercise their option to renew current contracts.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please email me at akwok@unhny.org.



To: Members of the New York City Council Aging Committee

From: Verizon
Ashley Greenspan, State & Local Government Affairs
ashley.greenspan@verizon.com

Date: Monday, September 22, 2025

Subject: Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Aging
Regarding Int. 238 on behalf of Verizon

Dear Chair Hudson and members of the NYC Council Aging Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Verizon in support of Int. 238, which seeks to establish a technical support program for older adults in New York City. We believe that digital inclusion is essential, and this bill takes a crucial step towards ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of age, have the skills and resources to navigate an increasingly digital world.

At Verizon, we recognize that bridging the digital divide for older adults is not just a matter of providing connectivity, but also of empowering them with the confidence and knowledge to use technology safely and effectively. That is why we have established [digital wellness initiatives](#) to support this goal as part of our commitment to responsible business. We have seen firsthand the success of such programs through our strategic partnership with [Older Adults Technology Services](#) (OATS) from AARP. We also incorporated our Tracfone brand into this partnership to offer older adults affordable prepaid plans with the reliable service of Verizon's extensive network.

OATS serves as a model for what the city might achieve. Recognizing OATS's deep expertise in engaging older adults, we collaborated to help individuals build healthy tech habits nationwide. OATS designed and launched a series of multi-week digital wellness courses specifically tailored for older adults, providing practical, hands-on tools for navigating the digital world securely and meaningfully. To expand this impact, we prioritized accessibility by bringing digital wellness programming directly into the community through hands-on workshops in Verizon retail locations in cities across the country, including New York City. These workshops were designed to meet participants where they are, offering personalized support and a welcoming environment to build digital confidence. At the NYC workshops, 94% of participants reported feeling more confident using their smartphones; and 82% said they were very likely to recommend this workshop to a friend or colleague. More information on in-person classes in NYC may be found at <https://seniorplanet.org/locations/new-york-city/>.

We hope that this partnership can serve an example of what can be achieved by programs designed to empower older adults to navigate the digital world with confidence and independence. Verizon stands ready to share best practices and insights gained from this partnership. And we welcome further conversations with the Council and the Office of Technology and Innovation to help develop the technical support program proposed by Int. No. 238.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: ~~8/28~~ 9/22/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner

Address: 2 Lafayette

I represent: NYC Aging

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 770 Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 09/22/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: EMMA BESSIRE

Address: 355 LEXINGTON AVE

I represent: CITY MEALS ON WHEELS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/22/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marcus Jackson

Address: _____

I represent: Encore Community Services

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/22/75

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anita Kwok

Address: _____

I represent: United Neighborhood Houses

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/22/75

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeannine Cahill-Jackson

Address: 260 E 161st St 8th Fl Bx NY 10451

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeannette Estima

Address: _____

I represent: Citymeals

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms