

Remarks from Sandra K. Vanin, Ed.D., Commissioner
West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services
Reauthorization of Older Americans Act
February 25, 2010

Written Remarks

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss West Virginia's position on the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

West Virginia is a small, rural and for many of our seniors an isolated state. It can take hours to deliver a few meals to remote homes and for many seniors living alone this delivery is their link to the community. Drivers can identify health issues or determine if other forms of assistance might be necessary with that meal delivery. Rising costs, increased demand and limited resources are adding to the difficulty of delivering that much needed meal.

The funding stream for low populated states places even greater strain on the budgets designated for home delivered meals. West Virginia has seen a shift from congregate meal demand to home delivered meals. There is a change in the service requirements of our seniors. Many prefer to be active in their communities and continue to work well past retirement age and do not see visiting a senior center as a high priority, yet when they need services, they require them to be in their own homes and this would include meals.

West Virginia and other states with similar geographic challenges face smaller increases in nutrition funding when compared to our larger populated sister states. In a recent comparison to regular Title III C funding (not based on performance) the following was discovered regarding meals served:

- o Florida receives ten times more dollars than West Virginia but serves only four times more meals
- o Indiana and Tennessee receive three times more dollars than WV but serve fewer meals
- o South Carolina receives two times more dollars than WV but serves fewer meals

When only population is the determining factor for funding nutrition, it places West Virginia and similar states at a disadvantage. Funding nutrition on a formula similar to NSIP (Nutrition Services Incentive Program) would help states with additional funding. If West Virginia's

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nutrition award was determined according to NSIP, our nutrition award would be an additional \$2,700,000.

If there is no modification to base allocations or additional funding based on service provision it will be very difficult to continue to meet the nutritional needs of seniors. Currently, 40 percent of our nutrition program is funded from non-match state dollars. State dollars have also funded 100 percent of our statewide Aging and Disability Resource Centers, 100 percent of our in-home and Alzheimer's respite programs of Lighthouse and FAIR, purchased 35 hot/cold meal delivery trucks with an additional 20 scheduled for this fiscal year.

In addition to funding for nutrition, including a funding stream in the Reauthorization for Aging and Disability Resource Centers would help to offset rising costs and increased demand for both ADRCs and their link to applying for federally funded competitive grants. As states see reductions in state funding, creating a specific ADRC funding stream would ensure continued services and help ease state funding burdens.

As the Administration on Aging moves forward with the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, West Virginia recommends the following:

- o A minimum percentage increase for all states when there is an increase in funding will allow the continuation of quality services;
- o An allocation that more appropriately reimburses on service numbers similar to NSIP just not population;
- o Inclusion of a funding stream for ADRCs.

Through these modifications smaller populated states would have an opportunity for increased funding that currently does not exist and would allow for the continuation of quality service. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.