

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services
02/15/2023 01:30 PM
HB23-1158 CO Commodity Supplemental Food Grant Program
Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Molly Wessling For themselves	<p>Madam Chair Michaleson Jenet and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Molly Wessling, and I work as a resident service coordinator at a Senior and Disabled subsidized housing building in downtown Denver.</p> <p>One of my major roles at Courthouse Square Apartments is to help meet the needs of my residents, including for their basic needs such as supplemental food. I've been fortunate enough to have had a great partnership with the Food Bank of the Rockies to provide almost 30 of my residents with food commodity boxes that contain items such as canned goods, fresh cheese and fresh produce every month. Now more than ever, the residents in my building need some extra help.</p> <p>As I'm sure you know, the emergency supplemental SNAP funds will end this month, yet the cost of food hasn't gone down at all. In fact, food has only been rising in price, especially healthy food like meat, fish and fresh produce. Food items such as these are expensive for the older adults and disabled residents in my building and are not always available to everyone. The older adults who receive commodity boxes in my building often express how incredibly grateful they are to receive their boxes because it takes financial stress off of them already having a fixed income and it provides them with healthy food options. I'm asking you, as someone that directly sees the impact of this program on its recipients in our community, to please consider this bill and help us continue fighting hunger in our state.</p> <p>I hope my personal testimony will help you better understand how truly important these funds are not only to so many stakeholders like myself as a provider, but to so many Coloradans who are hungry and need the help. Thank you for your time today.</p>

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, my name is Carol Pace. I am a volunteer with AARP Colorado. AARP has over 670,000 members in Colorado and is focused on Coloradans age 50 and above, and their families.

AARP supports HB 23-1158, Colorado Commodity Supplemental Food Grant Program.

Older adults have an increased risk of being hungry or food insecure. Research shows reasons for this may include being on Fixed Incomes, having Limited Mobility, and experiencing Changes in Health.

Research reveals that older adults are concerned about paying for Food, amongst other needs, such as paying for Medicine/Medical Care, Utilities, Rent or Mortgage and Transportation or Gas for a car.

Households experiencing food insecurity may not qualify for other federal nutrition programs and rely on local food pantries.

Feeding Colorado reports reaching 14,000 older Coloradans, but estimate there could be 90,000-100,000 eligible for their program. Additional issues to resolve for seniors include that some older adults are home-bound, transportation to food pantries is challenging, and food boxes could weigh 30 lbs. and be difficult to lift.

Feeding Colorado has developed a statewide map of food insecurity by county. The overall Food Insecurity rate for Colorado is 8.3%. That rises to 13% for the Black population and rises to a high of 18% for the Hispanic population. Food pantries and food banks are critical to address food insecurity.

We ask that the committee support HB 23-1158.

Respectfully,

Carol Pace, AARP Volunteer Advocate

References

1. **Colorado Food Insecurity Rates by County.** map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/overall/colorado
2. **AARP Policy Book 2021-2022: Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs.** policybook.aarp.org
3. **AARP Policy Book 2021-2022: Drive to End Hunger (DTEH).** endseniorhunger.aarp.org
4. **Frongillo EA, Warren AM. An Evaluation Report: Senior Food-assistance, Related Programming, and Seniors' Experiences Across the Feeding America Network: Senior Food Insecurity Exploratory Research.** Feeding America, 2022.
5. **Ziliak JP, Gundersen C. The State of Senior Hunger in 2020.** Prepared for Feeding America, 2022.
6. **Gundersen C, Ziliak J. Hunger Among Adults Age 50-59 in 2020: An Annual Report.** Prepared for Feeding America, 2022.
7. **Feeding America, "Hunger in America 2014: A Report on Older Adult Clients and Households of the Feeding America Network in 2013: Baby Boomers and Beyond – Facing Hunger After Fifty,"** July 2015. Sponsored in part by AARP Foundation.
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Demographics

Colorado 5.8 million people

Age 65 and above – 15% = 875,000

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL leg.colorado.gov/committees/public-behavioral-health-human-services/2023-regular-session. The page title is "COMMITTEE MEMBERS". It displays 11 representatives in a grid format, each with a circular portrait, their name, and their role. The representatives are: Dafna Michaelson Jenet (Chair), Mary Young (Vice Chair), Judy Amabile, Mary Bradfield, Brandi Bradley, Regina English, Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez, Eliza Hamrick, Richard Holtorf, Iman Jodeh, and Tammy Story.

Representative	Role
Dafna Michaelson Jenet	Chair
Mary Young	Vice Chair
Judy Amabile	
Mary Bradfield	
Brandi Bradley	
Regina English	
Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez	
Eliza Hamrick	
Richard Holtorf	
Iman Jodeh	
Tammy Story	

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Mary Young, Vice Chair

Judy Amabile

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