

**Meals on Wheels & CANASP
Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
March 3rd, 2021**

**H.B. 6439: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING
JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Stan Mingione, Executive Director of The Estuary Council of Seniors Inc. located in Old Saybrook. We are an Elderly Nutrition Provider for lower Middlesex County. We service 9 shoreline communities providing MOW to over 400 seniors.

I am writing today to voice some concerns about the Elderly Nutrition programs in the State of CT and how the impact of COVID-19 will forever change how we deliver our vital services to the states most vulnerable population.

Each meal provider in the state has had to become creative, flexible and innovative during this uncertain time of change. Many of us coming up with alternative ways of making sure that no senior suffers from food insecurity.

The Grab & Go meal service that many of us have instituted during COVID, once seen as a temporary fix during the pandemic, is one that I feel should be permanent part of the all ENPS “tool box” of services.

These changes to the nutrition programs are not without costs. As food costs are rising, along with the proposed rise of minimum wage, each meal provider is now challenged with continuing to provide meals to an increasing population of seniors who would otherwise have nowhere to turn. Fear of going to supermarkets or being in public places has increased the demand for both Meals on Wheels and “Grab & Go” meals. Also, as we like to say, our service is more than “just a meal”. We provided socialization, and daily wellness checks on individuals and our meals help folks to remain independent and in their homes reducing the need of institutionalization.

I believe it is imperative that Meals on Wheels are not left out of the conversation regarding funding to offset the impact of COVID and the minimum wage increase.

Thank you for your support of our vital meal programs and the senior citizens who rely on it.

Respectfully,

Stan Mingione

Executive Director

The Estuary Council of Seniors Inc.