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Your Update from AgeOptions

April 2019

AgeOptions Spearheads Legislative Collaboration Initiative

AgeOptions is spearheading an initiative to collaborate with Illinois federal legislators and encourage their support for issues affecting older adults, including reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, food insecurity, access to healthy food and social isolation, among others.

The initiative encourages agencies serving older adults to invite their legislators to visit and see what their programs are like at the grassroots level. According to Amanda Wojan, AgeOptions planning and advocacy specialist, the hope is that such visits will encourage future collaboration and affect legislators' decisions on important legislation such as the Older Americans Act, which is up for reauthorization in September. Older Americans Act funding is crucial for older adult programs.

The toolkit we sent to our partner agencies included this fact sheet on [Senior Hunger and Isolation: An escalating problem and the resulting need for Older Americans Act Reauthorization](#) as well as a template for an email letter to legislators inviting them to visit and detailing what their support means to programs and services for older adults. The letter states:

We recognize that you, as a federal legislator, are in a unique position to tackle issues within our communities, such as food insecurity, access to healthy food, social isolation, etc.

Legislators wear the hats of policymaker, champion and community leader. As policy makers, you can direct and provide incentives for state agencies to implement new programs, catalyze coordination among agencies, give start up or expansion funding to promising initiatives, and establish an award to recognize an organization fighting hunger in their communities. As hunger champions, you can form legislative hunger caucuses, create days for hunger awareness and elevate the visibility of hunger through your websites and social media. As

community leaders, you can bring together the public, nonprofit, corporate and foundation sectors to inspire meaningful change and imagine innovative solutions for low-income communities.

The initiative focuses on nutrition and food insecurity and social isolation between April 15 and 26 when the U.S. House of Representatives has district work periods. AgeOptions encourages agencies to invite representatives to nutrition/food insecurity- or social isolation-related events.

For more information on this initiative and advocacy for reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, please contact Amanda Wojan, amanda.wojan@ageoptions.org or (708)383-0258.