

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

The Senior Nutrition Task Force Act of 2023

U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Susan Collins (R-ME)

Why do we need the Senior Nutrition Task Force Act?

An estimated **5.5 million, or 7.1 percent**, of adults ages 60 and older lack reliable access to food in the United States. Adults with disabilities also experience limited food access, often referred to as food insecurity, and are **two times more likely** to be food insecure than their nondisabled counterparts. For older adults and adults with disabilities, access to nutritious food is vital to ensuring they remain healthy and independent.

Food insecure or malnourished older adults and adults with disabilities often have a diet that is lower in nutritional value, which puts them at higher risk for developing chronic conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension. Additionally, concerns about access to healthy and affordable foods can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms among these populations, including purchasing low-cost, low-nutrient foods or forgoing filling prescription medications in order to make ends meet. These strategies to stretch their household incomes can contribute to poorer health outcomes and higher health care costs, which may limit independence and quality of life among older adults and adults with disabilities.

Many older adults and adults with disabilities are eligible for federal nutrition assistance programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Community Living and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service. Yet, they often face significant barriers to accessing nutritious food and must navigate a complex system.

What will the Senior Nutrition Task Force Act do?

Coordinated efforts to address food insecurity among older adults and adults with disabilities across federal agencies will help to support the health and wellbeing of these populations. Specifically, the bill will:

- Create a federal interagency Task Force led by HHS and USDA that will be charged with identifying ways to combat hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition among older adults and adults with disabilities.
- Include older adults and adults with disabilities as members of the Task Force and ensure their perspectives are incorporated in federal strategies to address hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition.
- Require that the Task Force produce a report on recommendations to foster coordination across federal nutrition programs.