

Meals on Wheels Association of Texas

P.O. Box 6248, Austin, Texas 78762-6248

November 29, 2005

The Honorable Eric Bost
Under Secretary, Food and Nutrition Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0002

Dear Mr. Under Secretary,

The Meals on Wheels Association of Texas has concerns regarding the possible negative impact on the access to food stamps for seniors and disabled people that the Texas Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment Services (TIEES) project could have.

There are some 200 home-delivered and congregate meal programs serving virtually every community in Texas. With the help of more than 100,000 volunteers, they provide more than 30,000,000 nutritious meals each year to almost 150,000 frail elderly and disabled people. In most cases, clients of these organizations receive one meal a day and food stamps are one of the keys to their being able to live at home.

This project will decrease in-person assistance and increase reliance on the telephone and Internet while closing one-third of the local offices, thus making it more difficult for seniors and the disabled to get the food assistance they need. We also worry that it will put additional strain on the nonprofit organizations that provide services to Texas' elderly and disabled population.

We recognize that the U.S.D.A. shares many of our concerns and seeks to improve access to nutrition assistance and increase program participation. To that end, we appreciate that it is working with Texas to design a phased-in rollout to test the new system's ability to serve the vulnerable.

In creating that program, we hope your staff will require the state to make full reports to the U.S.D.A. regarding senior and disabled participation and recognize that, since the initial rollout will be only in Travis and Hays Counties, it will be limited to primarily urban and suburban populations. The five offices in these two counties serve only about three percent of the Food Stamp caseload and, therefore, it may not be possible for the design to work in other, less-populated areas. For example, difficulties for the elderly and disabled in Travis and Hays Counties will be very different than for those in rural areas where the nearest office or Community Based Organization may be more distant increasing the need for home visits.

The Meals on Wheels Association of Texas is prepared to assist you in developing plans that will help reduce costs and improve participation among the homebound elderly and disabled, our most vulnerable population.

Sincerely,

Dan Pruett
President, Meals on Wheels Association of Texas
President and CEO, Meals on Wheels and More, Austin, Texas

Abilene
Meals on Wheels Plus

Austin
Meals on Wheels and More

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Bandera County Committee on Aging

Bryan
Brazos Valley Community Action Agency

Cleburne
Meals on Wheels of Johnson and Ellis Counties

Corsicana
Community Services

Dallas
The Visiting Nurse Association of Texas

Denison
Tri-County Senior Nutrition Project

Fort Worth
Meals on Wheels of Tarrant County

Georgetown
Williamson Burnet County Opportunities

Giddings
Combined Community Action

Glen Rose
Somervell County Committee on Aging

Houston
Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston

Jasper
Jasper County Committee on Aging

Junction
Kimble County Meals on Wheels

McKinney
Collin County Committee on Aging

Odessa
Meals on Wheels of Odessa

Palestine
Meals on Wheels of Palestine

Rockwall
Rockwall County Committee on Aging

Rosenberg
Meals on Wheels and Much, Much More

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Meals for the Elderly

San Antonio
Christian Senior Services Meals on Wheels

Stephenville
Erath County Senior Citizens

Terrell
Kaufman/Navarro County Senior Citizen Service

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