

**Opening Statement of Senator Herb Kohl  
Special Committee on Aging Hearing  
Seniors Going Hungry in America: A Call to Action and Warning for the Future  
March 5, 2008**

Good morning. I'd like to thank Ranking Member Gordon Smith for holding today's hearing on senior hunger. The issue of hunger in America has been of concern to me for many years. As Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee, I have been uniquely positioned to address hunger at all stages of life. Each year I work to increase federal funding for healthy babies through the Women, Infants and Children Program, also known as WIC; for growing children through school breakfast programs; and—most relevant to today's hearing—for older Americans through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which provides a modest box of grocery staples every month to 440,000 low-income elderly Americans.

Federal programs like the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Elderly Nutrition Program, as well as non-profit organizations such as Meals on Wheels, make a huge impact by delivering food directly to seniors in their own homes. The Food Stamp program is another valuable federal program, although estimates show that it is under-utilized: only one in three eligible seniors actually enroll in the food stamp program. In spite of the fact that these programs and services cover only a fraction of the low-income seniors who need them, we continue to face a yearly battle with the administration to provide these programs with adequate funding.

As we will hear today, over 5 million seniors experience some form of food insecurity. Of these, 2.5 million are at-risk of hunger and 750,000 suffer from hunger due to poverty. The experience of these American seniors—who often must forego food in order to pay bills, buy medicine, or feed a family member—is unimaginable to most of us in this room today. I hope this hearing succeeds in raising awareness of these issues. I'd like to thank our witnesses for joining us, especially, Bob Blancato, who serves as the Executive Director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs. Ranking Member Smith, thank you once again for holding this important hearing.