

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL
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May 17, 2022

**Celebrating May 2022 as Older Americans Month in Los Angeles County by
Ensuring Appropriate Resources for our Vulnerable Seniors**

More than 10,000 adults turn 65 every day in the United States. Whereas, the 2010 population age 50 and older increased 27% by 2020, the size of the population age 65 and older grew by 43%. The population aged 50 to 64 increased 16% by 2020 and the 65 to 79-year-old population grew 52%. The age group 80 years and older will grow nearly 50% from 2020 to 2030.

Roughly one in three older adults aged 65 and up are economically insecure, with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level ([Kaiser Family Foundation](#), 2018). Studies show that an estimated 18% of older adults do not access the public benefits they are eligible for despite the increasing economic instability they experience. Only 48% of older adults aged 60 and up who are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are enrolled and receiving benefits ([USDA Food and Nutrition Service](#), 2020). Older women are more likely to live in poverty than men as a result of wage discrimination and taking time away from the workforce for caregiving ([Justice in Aging](#), 2020). Over half of Black and Hispanic seniors aged 65 and up have incomes below 200%

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of the Federal poverty line ([Kaiser Family Foundation](#), 2018). It has been documented that when provided assistance, older adults are able to access needed support to ensure their well-being.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, [an estimated one in five people](#) in Los Angeles County (County) lived with food insecurity, but since then, the number of people needing food assistance has increased markedly. It is estimated that one in four of our neighbors does not always know how or when their next meal is going to come. During the pandemic, food insecurity among older adults became a growing concern. According to Feeding America's 2021 report, *The State of Senior Hunger in America*, 8.8% of older adults in Los Angeles metropolitan areas face food insecurity.

The COVID-19 stay-at-home order has exacerbated food insecurity issues for hundreds of thousands of older adults in the County. The number of older adults who experience food insecurity is expected to rise in coming years with the increase in population size and the higher cost of living. However, with many State and Federal emergency food assistance resources coming to an end, it is imperative that the County look to bridge the gap for seniors who have been, or will be terminated from, emergency food assistance. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Federal government made temporary boosts to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit amounts. Starting in March 2020, SNAP participants in most States received SNAP Emergency Allotments (EAs) that brought their monthly benefit up to the maximum amount for their household size. In addition, from January 2021–September 2021, all SNAP households' benefits increased by another 15 percent. These EA's will expire when the Federal health pandemic ends. Additionally, with the termination of the State of California's Great Plates Delivered program, and with less food resources available for our older adults, a hunger cliff looms for this vulnerable population.

Despite the challenges, older adults in the County have contributed to building strong and resilient communities by sharing their wisdom, talents, and experience with others. To recognize their efforts and contributions, the month of May has been proclaimed as Older Americans Month throughout the County now for 58 years. This year,

Older Americans Month will be celebrated with a very appropriate National theme: **Age My Way**.

While Age My Way will look different for each person, here are common things everyone can consider:

- Planning: Think about what you will need and want in the future, from home and community-based services to community activities that interest you.
- Engagement: Remain involved and contribute to your community through work, volunteer, and/or civic participation opportunities.
- Access: Make home improvements and modifications, use assistive technologies, and customize supports to help you age better in place.
- Connection: Maintain social activities and relationships to combat social isolation and stay connected to your community.

As we prepare to launch a new County Aging and Disabilities Department in July, we celebrate older adults in the County and the key role they play. They have contributed greatly to the success of our County's programs and services, and they have earned our support, our thanks, and this recognition.

Older adults play vital, positive roles in our communities – as family members, friends, mentors, volunteers, civic leaders, members of the workforce, and more. Just as every person is unique, so too is how they age and how they choose to do it – and there is no “right” way. This year, as in all years, we owe older adults a tremendous debt of gratitude.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Proclaim the month of May 2022 as Older Americans Month; and
2. Direct the Director of the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) to coordinate with the appropriate County departments, the Los Angeles County Commission for Older Adults, community and senior centers, cities, and other stakeholders to organize the “58th Annual Older Americans Recognition Day” event, which will be held virtually on May 26, 2022.

3. Direct the Executive Director of the Aging and Disabilities Department within WDACS to identify the gap in funding, and consequences if continued funding is not provided for our County's food assistance efforts to older adults, and report back in writing within 14 days.
4. Direct the Executive Director of the Aging and Disabilities Department to work with the Directors of the Department of Public Social Services, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Homeless Initiative, the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs and other relevant departments serving older and dependent adults, to identify any gaps in providing comprehensive and proactive benefits navigators to assist our older adults with enrollment in all programming and benefits available to enhance quality of life, and report back to the Board in writing in 14 days on the gap in funding, if any, to implement the benefits navigator model.

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