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PRESS RELEASE

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SUPERVISOR WILMA CHAN DONATES \$100,000 TO HELP FEED OAKLAND'S MOST VULNERABLE SENIORS

Contribution part of effort to end hunger in Alameda County by 2020, ensures "Meals on Wheels" can continue serving homebound older adults in the face of increasing demand

OAKLAND, CA – Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan today donated \$100,000 to *Service Opportunities for Seniors (SOS)/Meals on Wheels*, which will allow the organization to continue providing hot, nutritious meals to more than a thousand homebound senior citizens in the City of Oakland. The Supervisor's support for *SOS/Meals on Wheels* is an extension of her ALL IN TO END HUNGER 2020 campaign, which aims to ensure that everyone in Alameda County has access to nutritious food and knows where their next meal is coming from (www.acgov.org/allin).

The demand for home-delivered meals by seniors continues to grow at an alarming rate. In just the last nine months, the number of Oakland seniors requesting assistance has nearly doubled, from 650 to 1,200. Demand is also increasing in central Alameda County as the county's senior population continues to grow.

SOS/Meals on Wheels projects that it will need to serve an additional 17,000 meals in the coming year in order to meet seniors' urgent need for food. A majority of these meals will be delivered to older adults living in Oakland. The cost of providing an additional 17,000 meals is approximately \$136,000.

"Not having enough food is a tragic reality for far too many of Oakland's seniors," said Supervisor Wilma Chan. "Many older adults are home-bound due to disability or because they lack access to transportation, so we don't see their struggles. Many others are too proud to ask for help or even acknowledge that they need it."

"Through my ALL IN TO END HUNGER 2020 campaign I am working with food advocates to make sure everyone has access to nutritious food and knows where their next meal is coming from," continued Chan. "Programs like *Meals on Wheels* play a vital role in helping to make sure our seniors can live healthy, fulfilling lives, but more must be done. I again call upon the state to streamline the CalFresh program and increase outreach and enrollment for older adults. The federal government must also increase funding for programs that put healthy and nutritious food on the table."

Supervisor Chan's \$100,000 contribution will help close the funding gap and ensure that some of Oakland's most vulnerable seniors continue to receive the nutritious meals they need. Through her leadership, the Alameda County Social Services Agency will also provide an additional \$200,000 to *SOS/Meals on Wheels* so they can meet the growing demand for services in the City of Oakland and communities throughout central Alameda County.

“Supervisor Chan stepped up to help Oakland’s most vulnerable seniors when they needed it most,” said Gerry Mellen, Board President of *SOS/Meals on Wheels*. “The Supervisor’s support will help us feed seniors who are in crisis. It also positions us to serve more seniors as the local population ages and demand for meals increases, but we’re asking the community to lend a hand, too. I urge people to visit www.sosmow.org and make a financial contribution in support of our seniors. Just \$40 can feed a hungry senior for a week.”

Federal and state grants provide annual funding for approximately 173,000 meals in Oakland and central Alameda County, but the money has never been sufficient to meet the need. Funding has remained flat while wages, the price of food, and packaging and delivery costs have increased. *SOS/Meals on Wheels* projects that they will need to serve about 190,000 meals over the next year in order to feed the area’s most vulnerable senior citizens.

Homebound seniors often do not have the resources to access or prepare food for a variety of reasons, including health problems, restricted incomes, lack of transportation and functional limitations. Seniors with lower incomes and disabilities are substantially more likely to face the threat of hunger than those with higher incomes. In Alameda County, 25% of seniors receiving service from *Meals on Wheels* live alone, 95% are low-income, and 95% struggle with activities of daily living, such as cooking, shopping and indoor mobility.

During the recession (2007 – 2013), the number of seniors experiencing hunger in America increased by 63%. Despite an improving economy, a high proportion of seniors are still going without enough food. A 2013 report found that nearly 16% of seniors face the threat of hunger, putting at risk the health of millions of older adults. Hunger is associated with a number of chronic health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, cancer and mental health issues, including depression.

About Supervisor Wilma Chan

Alameda County Supervisor Chan represents District 3, which includes the cities of Alameda, San Leandro, parts of Oakland including Chinatown, Jack London, Fruitvale and San Antonio neighborhoods, and the unincorporated community of San Lorenzo. She is currently Vice President of the Board of Supervisors, Chair of the Health Committee, and a member of the County’s Personnel, Administrative, & Legislative Committee, the Budget Committee, and the Unincorporated Services Committee. For more on Supervisor Chan’s accomplishments and current initiatives, please visit www.acgov.gov/board/district3 or connect on Facebook with “Supervisor Wilma Chan.”

About Service Opportunities for Seniors (SOS)/Meals on Wheels

SOS/Meals on Wheels is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has been providing food delivery services to homebound seniors in Alameda County for nearly 50 years. The organization is dedicated to helping homebound seniors 60 years of age and older maintain their independence and remain safely in their own homes. SOS/Meals on Wheels delivers 1,100 hot, nutritious meals per day to homebound seniors in Oakland, San Leandro, Hayward, Castro Valley and San Lorenzo. Meals on Wheels’ drivers provide daily check-ins and social contact for some of Alameda County’s most vulnerable and isolated older residents. Please visit www.sosmow.org for more information.

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