

We are so excited to share highlights from the Food Is Medicine Coalition's (FIMC) Congressional Briefing which was held on March 16 in Washington D.C. on the power of medically tailored food and nutrition services (MTFNS) to improve the experience of care and the health outcomes of people with critical and chronic illness and drastically reduce their overall healthcare costs.

There is no dedicated federal funding stream for medically tailored food and nutrition for people living with critical and chronic illness. The Food Is Medicine Coalition represents nonprofit food and nutrition providers across the country that tailor services specifically to people living with severe and/or chronic illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, kidney disease, advanced diabetes, cardiovascular disease and many others. FIMC's goal is to preserve and expand coverage of this low-cost, high-impact intervention for critically-ill clients.

Research shows that our model of delivering nutritious meals to those most at risk for malnutrition because of their illness saves critical health care dollars, by keeping people in their homes when they are sick, rather than in more expensive hospitals or nursing homes. Research has also demonstrated that good nutrition promotes better health outcomes for the chronically ill. As malnutrition is a huge contributor to hospitalization, re-admission and nursing home care, incorporating food and nutrition services into healthcare planning is critical.

"We are committed to ensuring and expanding access to medically tailored food and nutrition programs for people living with severe and chronic illnesses," said Karen Pearl, President & CEO of God's Love We Deliver and Convener of the Food Is Medicine Coalition, "Secure access to food, nutrition interventions, and quality health care are all fundamentally and inextricably related to positive health outcomes and lower costs."

The briefing for the House of Representatives was made possible by Representative Jerrold Nadler from New York, Representative Jim McGovern from Massachusetts & Representative Lynn Jenkins from Kansas. Senator Gillibrand made the Briefing possible for the Senate.

"For more than 30 years, God's Love We Deliver has served the sick and homebound of New York, providing healthy, medically-tailored food to millions of New Yorkers, and I am proud to have welcomed them to Washington, D.C., for this informative and timely briefing," said Congressman Jerrold Nadler. "Research now demonstrates what we have known for years: providing medically tailored food to the sickest of the sick improves health outcomes and saves money. I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress on the important issues raised in this briefing."

"I've had the pleasure of seeing firsthand the incredible work being done by Community Servings across Massachusetts to provide medically tailored meals to those dealing with severe and chronic illness," said Congressman Jim McGovern. "We've known for a long time that nutritious food really is medicine and I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress to support the vital work of the Food is Medicine Coalition."

Karen Pearl opened the Briefing with an overview of the Food is Medicine Coalition, including its services, history, national reach and impact. Dr. Sheri Weiser, from University of California at San Francisco, presented research on the role of medically tailored nutrition in preventing and treating severe and chronic illness, and most especially the incredible cost savings associated with its provision to people with acute and chronic illness. Sue Daugherty, CEO of MANNA presented current research that shows a 24% savings for health plan members who receive medically tailored meals. Matt Pieper, Executive Director of Open Hand Atlanta presented examples from around the country of healthcare innovations at the state level that are incorporating medically tailored meals; and David Waters, CEO of Community Servings in Boston, detailed the significant barriers to reimbursement, even within healthcare innovations programs designed to foster connection to food and nutrition services. Robert Greenwald, Director of the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School outlined the implications for healthcare policy at the national level.

"Medically tailored meals are not just cost effective, they are cost saving. The roadmap for Congress is clear. Medically tailored meals must be incorporated as a reimbursable service for the highest-risk, highest-need individuals in our healthcare system: the sickest of the sick that cost the healthcare system the most," said Ms. Pearl. "Medically tailored meals are not merely a good option; they are indispensable toward achieving our national health goals."

For more highlights from Wednesday's briefing, follow us on twitter [@FIMCoalition](#) #FIMCBriefing16 #FIMC.

