

TESTIMONY

3/13/07

**Nutrition Assistance Program
aka, State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SSNAP)**

Good afternoon, my name is Kate Walton, CFB Programs Director, and I am speaking on behalf of Nancy Carrington, Executive Director of Connecticut Food Bank. CFB is a privately funded non-profit agency with the mission to alleviate hunger in Connecticut. CFB solicits donations from the food industry to distribute to charities that feed those in need. There are currently over 650 member agencies consisting of soup kitchens, food pantries, emergency shelters, day programs and residential programs that receive food from Connecticut Food Bank.

Emergency feeding programs try to provide balanced nutritious meals to those they assist. In order to do this, it is necessary for programs to have high protein foods. It is a continuous struggle for food banks to obtain these high demand items. **The State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SSNAP) provides funds to the state's food banks (CFB and Foodshare) to purchase high protein food for distribution to local food pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters. Every dollar of state money goes directly to food purchase. Every dollar of state money feeds people in need. Every dollar of state money is spent in the state of Connecticut – SSNAP dollars increase business in Connecticut.**

Since it's inception in 1988, SSNAP was virtually level funded for 12 years. **SSNAP dollars were increased by 42% in the 2001-02 budget, however the number of programs participating increased by 48%** the same year. Due to the constantly rising cost of food, buying power has continuously declined since the inception of the program. This means the pounds of food bought with each dollar spent continues to decline. Fewer pounds mean fewer meals.

This year I ask for a \$2 million dollar increase in SSNAP funding. Other states fund like programs at much higher levels: Massachusetts \$12M, New York \$22.5M, New Jersey \$4M, Ohio \$7.4M, and Pennsylvania \$18.75M.

The following chart outlines the SSNAP program since its start in 1988. In that year \$409,046 bought 591,785 pounds of food. That food was distributed to 160 agencies across the state. On average each agency received 3699 pounds of food. Dividing the pounds of food purchased by the dollars spent gives the resulting pounds of food per dollar figure. In that year 1.45 lbs of food were acquired for each dollar.

Over time the numbers are telling: more agencies are participating the cost of food has gone up and dollars put into the program have not kept pace. The end result is that increasing need is not met.

Fiscal Year	# of Agencies	Lbs of Food	Lbs per Agency	\$ Spent	Lbs per Dollar
1988-1989	160	591,785	3699	409,046	1.45
1989-1990	172	566,795	3295	409,392	1.38
1990-1991	185	534,756	2891	409,651	1.31
1991-1992	209	520,456	2490	409,606	1.27
1992-1993	226	544,681	2410	411,489	1.32
1993-1994	238	513,546	2158	410,975	1.25
1994-1995	239	505,333	2114	393,256	1.28
1995-1996	227	511,741	2254	398,242	1.28
1996-1997	231	565,380	2448	409,687	1.38
1997-1998	237	534,845	2257	419,443	1.28
1998-1999	244	474,845	1946	421,515	1.13
1999-2000	241	525,381	2180	430,246	1.22
2000-2001	264	536,607	2033	448,959	1.20
2001-2002	391	771,097	1972	638,337	1.21
2002-2003	557	742,067	1332	635,023	1.17
2003-2004	495	674,583	1363	636,468	1.06
2004-2005	497	682,064	1372	636,468	1.07
2005-2006	463	649,521	1403	636,468	1.02

In this wealthy state of CT people without means are going without meals to make ends meet and it is criminal. Please increase funding by \$2M for this very critical Nutrition Assistance Program.

Thank you for your attention.