



A Member of America's Second Harvest
450 Woodland Ave, Bloomfield, CT 06002-1342
Phone (860) 286-9999 Fax (860) 286-7860
On the web: <http://www.foodshare.org>

Testimony before the Human Services Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
January 30, 2007

Presented by:
Gloria J. McAdam
President and CEO, Foodshare

Good afternoon. My name is Gloria McAdam and I am the President and CEO of Foodshare, the regional food bank serving the greater Hartford area, a position I have held since 1984. I have also been involved in the hunger issue and food banking on a regional and national level. I served for two years on the national Board of Directors of America's Second Harvest: The Nation's Food Bank Network and the country's largest charitable food program. In addition, I served two years each as secretary and then chair of the Eastern Region Association of Food Banks, which extends from Maine to Florida. I am a founding member and former chair of the Connecticut Food Policy Council. I am also a founding member and current chair of End Hunger Connecticut! as well as a member and past chair of the City of Hartford Food Policy Commission.

I welcome this opportunity to comment on funding for community food pantries.

It's important that we look at the big picture. Hunger is a problem throughout Connecticut. There is now at least one private agency providing food to people in need in greater Hartford in every town in the greater Hartford region and over 500 such local agencies around our state.

But we need to look even further. Food pantries cannot solve the problem of hunger in the state. Private charities do not have enough food, money or volunteers to meet all of the needs. In fact, 94% of the food distributed to low-income people in Connecticut comes from federal programs and only 6% comes from the private charities. Yet only 60% of the people who are eligible for federal food stamps in Connecticut actually receive them. A little bit of effort to get more people signed up for food stamps would have far more impact than more food pantries.

Consider this. Foodshare distributes about 10 million pounds of food a year in greater Hartford – that equals more than a tractor-trailer load of food each and every day, 365 days per year. Yet, if we could increase food stamp usage by just 5%, that would equal more food than Foodshare distributes in an entire year! And, it would allow people

in need to go to the supermarket and pick out their own food, rather than having to accept whatever happens to be available that day. In addition, I'm certain it would be much cheaper for us to increase food stamp participation by 5% than for Foodshare to double in size!

So how do we bring these two big picture items – food pantries in every town and the need to increase food stamps – together in a way that makes sense and that the legislature can act on? The two leading food banks in the state, together with other anti-hunger advocates, are proposing that we can do it through the State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SSNAP) program.

SSNAP was created in the 1980's to purchase high protein foods for food pantries and soup kitchens. Unfortunately, because the funding for this important program has been cut over the years, even as the needs were growing and inflation was increasing the cost of food, the program has much less impact today than when it was conceived.

Funding in the current fiscal year for SSNAP is at \$360,000. By comparison, some of our neighboring states are way ahead of us. In Massachusetts, they fund their state program at \$12 million, New York appropriates \$22.5 million, New Jersey \$4 million, and Pennsylvania \$18.75 million. I propose that the legislature increase the funding for food purchase through the SSNAP program to \$2 million in the coming fiscal year.

In addition, as we have heard today, food pantries often need support to increase food distribution capacity and to do the outreach work necessary to sign people up for food stamps and other food assistance program. I propose that the legislature also appropriate another \$2 million in one-time funding to build the capacity of local food pantries and soup kitchens around the state. Since many of these organizations are small, with limited administrative capacity, these funds could be administered by the state's two regional food banks to ensure that every food pantry and soup kitchen has fair and reasonable access to them. In addition to facilities and equipment like coolers and freezers, these funds could be used to equip organizations with computer equipment and other tools which would help them help their clients access food stamps and other federal food programs.

As the Human Services Committee considers how to end hunger in Connecticut, I urge you to focus on long-term efforts, rather than the construction of new food pantries. I grew up in a world where food pantries did not exist because there was no need for them. My children have grown up in a world where food pantries are the norm. I hope my grandchildren can again live in a world where food pantries are not needed because we have wisely chosen comprehensive and appropriate solutions to the problem of hunger.

Thank you.

Addendum:

Sources of food for low-income people in Connecticut:

Federal food programs in Connecticut		
	Funds	People served
School breakfast	\$12,282,010	45538 *
School lunch	\$57,364,081	137787 *
Summer Food	\$714,278	33381
Food Stamps	\$223,194,712	204,146
WIC	\$35,507,241	52059
CACFP	\$9,142,703	4874
TEFAP	\$2,550,154	NA

Total Federal \$340,755,179 NA

State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SSNAP	\$360,000
SSBG	\$276,468

Total State \$636,468

Private food distribution in Connecticut

Conn. Food Bank	\$13,361,021 est.	127,000
Foodshare	\$12,580,216 est.	100,000
Less TEFAP	\$2,550,154	(included above)
Less SSNAP	\$636,468	(included above)

Total \$22,754,615

Total food assistance in Connecticut

Public	\$341,711,983	94%
Private	\$22,754,615	6%

\$364,466,598

* only free or reduced priced meals are counted here