

TESTIMONY

2/26/08

Human Services Committee

Thank you for affording Master's Manna, Inc the opportunity to share input as to the need to increase SSNAP funding.

Master's Manna is a food pantry located in Wallingford that serves Wallingford, Meriden, Cheshire, North Haven and Durham. Individuals and families are able to "shop" weekly for food, clothing, and personal hygiene items. 1770 individuals were served on an ongoing basis during 2007. We have seen an increase in the number of individuals served already this year over the same period last year.

Let me ask you a few questions. How many times in any given day do you eat? Three? Plus 1 or 2 snacks a day? And coffee? Are you able to select anything you desire to eat? Are you limited to what you can obtain from a food pantry?

Imagine walking into a food pantry. It is the last place you thought you would find yourself. Obtaining food from the food pantry may mean the difference between having no money to put in the gas tank and making it to work tomorrow. You are handed a box or perhaps a few bags and instructed to select the foods that you and your family will require for the next few days. There is no way can we offer enough food for one week for each family that walks through the door when there are 40 to 55 families a day. You are then told you can have only 1 can of tuna fish, 1 box of cereal, 1 roll of toilet paper~ it there is any. You may select from canned veggies, canned fruit, soup, pasta, rice, some fresh produce from CT Food Bank, and MAYBE some frozen French fries, pizza, chicken or fish when Thurston Foods makes generous donations for which we are very thankful.

Nutritional, high protein food is difficult and cost prohibitive to have on our shelves for our "shoppers". We have a sign hanging in our front window asking for donations of tuna, cereal and peanut butter. Most food pantries are non -profits that work on donations or if fortunate enough... grants. Monies are scarce.

With an increase in SSNAP funding we would be able to offer the healthier, more nutritious food choices over an extended period of time to more families. Please help make our job easier and our neighbors healthier.

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