



February 25, 2008

Senator Jonathon Harris, Co-Chair
Representative Peter Villano, Co Chair
Human Services Committee, State of Connecticut
General Assembly - LOB
Hartford, Ct

RE: Raised Bill No. 415 - An appeal for support of

**AN ACT CONCERNING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE
SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
AND GRANTS FOR EMERGENCY AND COMMUNITY
FOOD SITES.**

Dear Human Services Committee Leaders:

Food security is woefully under-funded and misunderstood in Connecticut. As Programs Director of Connecticut Food Bank I can attest to the fact that a quarter of a million of our citizens are at high risk of hunger, malnutrition and general ailments associated with lack of nutritious food being within reach on a consistent basis.

Our emergency food system is primarily staffed and funded by volunteers and faith based communities, where particularly in urban centers, their own capacity to serve others in need, is severely limited by substandard facilities and lack of funds. Areas with high densities of poverty and chronic illnesses, are truly living on a hand to mouth basis and are further stressed by the fragility of the food chain as a whole.

The very efficiencies that make modern food retailing profitable, are exacerbating the problem of hunger as less food is available to the charitable food system, food prices are skyrocketing and the food itself is becoming less "shelf stable" as prepared, frozen and fresh products predominate the shopping aisles. Bottlenecks created by lack of refrigeration and freezing capacity, worn out cooking appliances, lack of storage and energy costs from running antiquated equipment will continue to delimit the ability of Connecticut Food Bank's member programs located throughout the six counties we serve, to equitably distribute the limited donated resources that are available.

The requested SSNAP funding increase will really help to close the gap in food supplies going to human service programs, shelters and emergency food pantries – the primary venue where our poor working families, the elderly, and disabled obtain food. But these funds may not resolve the problem if the very programs who are the direct link to those in need, cannot transport, handle, prepare, store and provide the food safely and efficiently. The funds to upgrade member programs' food distribution sites, appliances, facility, communication and transport capacities is equally urgent to keep new gaps from forming in numerous communities.

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A PARTNERSHIP TO ALLEVIATE HUNGER

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Connecticut Food Bank and the Congressional Hunger Center recently conducted a comprehensive analysis of the gap between food distribution and need in Connecticut. Other studies conducted by the University of CT, Hartford Food System and the Connecticut Food Policy Council all speak to the extreme problem of food insecurity that plagues many of our urban and rural towns.

Food security is vital to our “homeland”. The State of Connecticut needs to put an appropriate level of resources in place to ensure that - whether the forecast is for a recession or a hurricane, massive food recall, or other interruption in food supplies – our most vulnerable populations have a safety net in place. Since the “status quo” is already stretched to capacity – and failing to actually stave off hunger and food insecurity for so many – the time has come to make access to food as important as any other funding priority that has been put on the budget “chopping block”.

The hidden emergency food system – the network of caring people that the state does not pay for – needs to be supplied with basic food and related resources - so that the vast talent and contributions of our volunteering citizens who are supplying the “people power” can continue to ameliorate hunger in our communities effectively.

Sincerely,



Kate Walton
Programs Director