

February 26, 2008

Representative Peter Villano
Co-Chair
Human Resources Committee
General Assembly
State of CT

Dear Mr. Villano,

I am a Programs Coordinator for CT Food Bank and a resident of Hamden. It is my responsibility to oversee programs that distribute food to people in need to in upper New Haven, Litchfield and Windham County. I see first hand the need that exists in Connecticut for additional food resources as well as the importance of having fully functioning programs to distribute these resources. Bill No. 415 addresses both needs and I strongly encourage you to support it.

Our programs in Hamden, Meriden, Waterbury, Torrington, Willimantic, Danielson, Danbury and other large rural and urban centers rely heavily on the food that they can obtain through the SSNAP grant three times a year, especially to obtain meat, a high priced nutritious protein. Many of these programs also need to improve their ability to store and distribute the food they receive by purchasing freezers, coolers, and shelving. Some need to upgrade their space so they can increase the amount of food they are able to store and distribute.

There is a family shelter in Waterbury that provides housing for 30 that are trying to prepare meals for their guests, including children, using a microwave, crock pots, and toaster oven because the kitchen that they have access to needs repair in order to meet safety and code requirements. I have been told that this severely limits what food they can utilize to serve their clients.

A number of small but vital food pantries in Hamden have such limited freezer space they can't order highly nutritious meats that come in through the SSNAP grant. If they can not handle the food safely, they can not distribute it.

Another agency in Ansonia that currently operates a food pantry is in the process of adding a much needed soup kitchen and will need more food. At this point in order to give SSNAP funds to this new program, we would have to reduce the amount we give to other programs in the area. An increase to the SSNAP grant would be a tremendous benefit for new and expanding programs.

Overall the price of food has increased and many of our programs are receiving about the same amount of funding to purchase food through SSNAP as they have in the past two years which means their dollars are not going as far, but the need continues to increase.

I strongly encourage you and your colleagues to pass Bill No. 415.

Sincerely,



Sherry Grant
Programs Coordinator