



**A Member of America's Second Harvest**  
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**Testimony before the Human Services Committee**  
Connecticut General Assembly  
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Presented by:  
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Executive Vice President and COO, Foodshare

Good afternoon. My name is Christine O'Rourke. I am the Executive Vice President at Foodshare and am here representing our CEO, Gloria McAdam, who could not be with you today. As you may know Foodshare is the regional food bank serving the greater Hartford area.

I welcome this opportunity to comment on SB 137, the Commodities Assistance Program, how it supports the work of our local community food pantries, and how we could make the program work more effectively.

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 every town in the greater Hartford region, where Foodshare distributed over 12 million pounds of food last year. In the current economy, demand at local food pantries was up by 20% last year over the year before.

The Commodities Assistance Program is particularly important to the work to feed hungry families, as it provides a stable base of high nutrition foods, supplementing the donated foods that Foodshare solicits from the food industry.

Foodshare supports the proposed change in the language of SB 137 that would allow the food banks to collect a higher handling fee for this product. This program was created in 1988 and the handling fee was capped at five cents per pound at that time. Since then the costs of labor, transportation and storage have risen significantly, forcing food banks to use other funding to underwrite the administrative costs of this program. An increase in the allowed handling fee would allow Foodshare to put these funds to better use providing more food through private efforts.

It's important to note that raising the cap does not automatically mean that Foodshare would charge the maximum handling fee. This is because Foodshare makes every effort to keep the costs low to the food pantries and community kitchens we serve through grants and other incentives. Raising the cap on the handling fee for this program would allow us to charge more if the circumstances made it necessary to do so.

Thank you.