



**Testimony in favor of HB 5160, An Act Concerning Results-Based Accountability
Select Committee on Children
February 23, 2010**

Good afternoon, my name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide food security and anti-hunger outreach, advocacy and education organization. In addition I sit on Speaker Donovan's Task Force on Children and the Recession and am the co-chair of the SustiNet Adult and Child Obesity Task Force. I am here today in support of HB 5160, An Act Concerning Results-Based Accountability.

This legislation calls for an annual report card that assesses the effectiveness of state policies and programs "in promoting the result that Connecticut children grow up safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives". I would like to suggest that food insecurity rates be included as a primary indicator of progress.

We know that food insecurity can be the root of many issues with children, from health issues such as obesity to the inability to learn due to the effects of hunger to instability and stress in a family. There are federal programs that will help children, such as school breakfast, summer feeding, afterschool snacks and at-risk dinners (soon to be available in Connecticut) and SNAP, formally known as food stamps. While we have some of the tools needed to effect the success of a family and the children in it we need to access their usefulness and see if other tools need to be employed.

Last November the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) published the first of yearly reports that measures food hardship in each of Connecticut's six counties. 14.6 percent of Connecticut families suffered food hardship – not having enough money to buy enough food – and in households with children almost 1 in 5, or 18.7 percent, struggled to put food on the table.

The FRAC report on food hardship analyzes survey data that were collected by Gallup and provided to FRAC. I have attached the Connecticut report to my testimony. I am also aware of a separate screener for food security that will be available well before the date this legislation goes into effect if this report uses primary research.

Our children are our future – there is no denying that. Any policy that will create better choices for children and their families must include an assessment of food security and hunger. According to the Children's Health Watch, *marginal* food security harms children's health and development. Research shows that children in marginally food-secure households are at greater risk for health problems, developmental delay, and impaired school performance than children in food-secure households. Given that child abuse, neglect, inability to learn and poor health outcomes are only some of the outcomes of food insecurity it is clear that it should be a part of this ongoing report.

Thank you.