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450 Woodland Ave, Bloomfield, CT 06002-1342
Phone (860) 286-9999 / Fax (860) 286-7860

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
March 11, 2010

Presented by:

Gloria J. McAdam
President and CEO, Foodshare

Good afternoon, my name is Gloria McAdam and I am the President and CEO of Foodshare, the food bank serving the greater Hartford area. I'm in my twenty-sixth year at Foodshare and I have never seen growth in the numbers of families needing help with basic necessities like food as has happened in this past year. Local food pantries report a 20% increase in the number of families coming in looking for help. Not a week goes by but that I hear about a new head of household in a line at a food pantry or the Mobile Foodshare truck who says something like, "I used to donate to this program, and I never thought I would be here needing help. But I need to feed my children, so here I am."

I appreciate the challenges of the current state budget situation, but Governor Rell's Deficit Mitigation Plan is bad planning. This is not the time to take away food from the hungry. The Governor's proposal zeroes out funding for Nutrition Assistance – money that the Connecticut Food Bank and Foodshare use to get high nutrition, protein food to food pantries and community kitchens around the state.

The proposal also cuts access to programs that put much needed food onto people's tables and brings funds into the state by cutting out the Human Services Infrastructure (HSI). HSI funds the CAP agencies intake on state programs to ease the congestion at DSS – AND is used as a match to bring in federal funds for outreach on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food stamps). These outreach efforts around the state help more people access SNAP benefits. For many people in Connecticut, food pantries and SNAP are the only things allowing them to feed their families. Loss of these funds will mean more people will suffer.

These proposed cuts target families, children, and seniors who need our help now more than ever. By cutting outreach funding, they will also mean fewer people enrolled in SNAP, and thus leave federal funds on the table. Funds that could have been spent in our local grocery stores and helped that clerk stocking the shelves and that truck driver who delivers the food to the store keep their jobs, as well as

helping the grocery store owner pay the rent and his vendors. The best thing we can do to stimulate our local economy is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP is enrolled in the program, for, according to Moody's, every \$1 in SNAP benefits results in \$1.73 of local economic activity. And yet, we only have about two-thirds of our eligible citizens actually enrolled in the program. This is no time to cut the funding intended to help those folks receive this benefit!

Of course, my primary work is in the private sector of emergency food assistance and let me assure you that we are upholding our part of the work to end hunger in Connecticut. Last year, Foodshare distributed 12 million pounds of food to more than 300 local organizations that feed hungry people right here in the greater Hartford area. This is about 16 tons of food each and every day of the year, more than a tractor-trailer load of food getting out to people in need every single day!

Some people hear about Foodshare, and think, "Wow, the private sector can take care of the problem of hunger." I'm here to tell you first and foremost -- that is wrong! Yes, 12 million pounds of food per year is a lot of food. But through our partner agencies, Foodshare serves 128,000 people, including 50,000 children, in greater Hartford each year. 12 million pounds of food divided up among 128,000 people works out to less than 100 pounds of food per person per year. Less than two pounds of food per week, when most of us eat about a pound of food each and every time we sit down for a meal. Foodshare could double or triple in size and it still would not be enough!

I am NOT suggesting that Foodshare should double or triple in size. I believe that ensuring that everyone has access to enough nutritious food to sustain themselves and lead healthy and productive lives is the responsibility of the entire community – government and charities, individuals and organizations. We in the private, charitable sector need government to do its share if we are to end hunger in Connecticut.

Thank you.